



Of
Red Dragons
and
Evil Spirits

Post-Communist
Historiography
Between
Democratization
and New Politics
of History

Edited by
Oto Luthar



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PREFACE

The debate on perspectives of historical interpretation has become an inseparable part of the new politics of history across Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The professional debate on the nature of historical explanation has been largely overshadowed by new attempts to monopolize historical interpretation. Vivid interest in new forms of historical representation has given way to politicized reinterpretation of the most disputed parts of national history, of World War II and the time of socialism. Consequently, the anticipated, or awaited, democratization and modernization of historical interpretation have been obstructed by (at least) two processes: the nationalization of history, and the struggles for new political monopolization of a particular version of historical interpretation.

Accordingly, the colleagues invited to contribute to this volume were encouraged to engage in fields where the dynamics of change in dealing with the politics of *memory* in New Europe can be observed. The contributors were asked to rethink, based on their research and regional focuses: (1) the emergence of the new politics of memory, that is, post-socialist historiographies, particularly in relation to the question of the possible political involvement in interpreting the past and its effects on the discussion of the theory and philosophy of history; and the (2) nationalization of the past by reinventing the “authentic national historical memory.”

In this view, the authors—coming from or investigating the developments in eight countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia)—aim to address the relationship between different modes of post-socialist enactments of memory and representations of the past.

The juxtaposition of these politics and modes of remembering, shaped by displacement and transnational memory practices in various

and profoundly distinctive national settings, emphasizes divergences and contributes to overcoming once more the “bloc division” of Europe, which still persists in viewing the “East” as a monolith. This volume assesses the potential to form common European memory practices.

Finally, the particularly well-represented former Yugoslav countries, in combination with several other post-socialist case studies, allow for a detailed comparison of the “war on memory” fought during and after the post-Yugoslav wars and the reinvention of national histories in post-socialist countries that underwent a peaceful transformation. The comparison between post-Yugoslav rediscoveries and refurbishments of the past, followed by the discussion on the post-socialist notion of historical (re)interpretation, are particularly instructive for understanding the possible differences between Central European and Southeastern European context.

The authors have struggled with this book for quite a long time. The main reason for this was our desire to integrate the chapters into a coherent whole. If our attempt has proven reasonably successful, it is owing to the critical readings and suggestions of our colleagues and reviewers. The authors are particularly grateful to Yana Hashamova, Paul Freedman, Martin Pogačar, Tadej Turnšek, Tanja Petrović, Breda Luthar, and Heidemarie Uhl. Finally, I also want to thank the European Institute at Columbia University and the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures at The Ohio State University, Columbus for their hospitality and stimulating research environment.

Oto Luthar
September 2016

I N T R O D U C T I O N

“Red Dragon and the Evil Spirits”

O t o L u t h a r

On September 12, 2015, a little over seventy years after the end of World War II and seventy-four years after two death camps were opened on the island of Pag, Croatia, an Israeli film crew visited the village of Metajna. They wanted to film the site of the camp system located there and in some other locations (e.g., Slana Bay) in the northern part of the island.¹ When the van with the four-member crew parked in the village center and the cameraman and the soundmen started to take out of their equipment, one of the villagers who gathered close by asked them to leave. A seventy-year-old Dani Novak from the United States, who joined the crew especially for this occasion, tried to explain to the villagers that his grandmother and aunt were interned in their village during World War II. But the villagers would not listen. After stating categorically that “there was nothing there,” they called the police and the police officers escorted the crew to the hotel. The next day the crew was permitted to continue with its work and then left the island—again escorted by the police.

Although rhetoric like “there is nothing there,” “we do not know anything” or “we don’t want to be linked with anything” became a part of Croatian reinterpretation of the past, the incident on Pag created quite a stir in public. Reporters of Croatian national TV and some

1 In the summer of 1941, more than 8,000 Jews, Roma, and Serbs lived without shelter in Slana and Metajna in inhumane conditions. They were deported from Zagreb and Gospić. The majority of internees were women. The camps were closed after three months by Italians who were shocked by the way the Ustasha treated the internees. The commander of the camp, Ivan Devčić-Pivac, never faced justice for his crimes. After the war he escaped to Argentina, where he died.

newspapers that covered the event inquired as to why so little is known about the camps and the Jewish victims. The answer they received came as quite a surprise. Despite the fact that there is extensive documentation (photographs, documents, and testimonies) on the two campsites in Slana and Metajna, Pag remains “an unwanted subject” not only for the usual negationists and revisionists, but for the majority of inhabitants of the village and areas near the former camps. Indeed, it was they who destroyed memorial plaques in Slana and Metajna three times. One of the reasons why I am referring to the events on Pag Island is because they help us understand the Croatian political and populist revisionism. Within the framework of the former, particular mention should be made of the idea to rename the Croatian Parliament. According to some members of parliament (MPs) of the right-wing Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party, it should be renamed the Croatian State Parliament, which is the name that was used during World War II under the fascist Ustasha regime known as the Independent State of Croatia (NDH).² The leading personality of the Croatian populist negationism and revisionism in Croatia, however, remains Marko Perković—Thompson, whose songs openly glorify the Ustasha regime and its crimes against Serbs, Jews, and members of the resistance movement between 1941 and 1945.

A similar process may be witnessed in Slovenia. In the latest stage of post-socialist reinterpretation of the most traumatic part of the national past related to World War II, Slovenian negationists and revisionists³ insist on deflecting attention away from the crimes of collab-

2 See also Sven Milekić, “‘State’ Parliament’s Return Makes Some Croats Uneasy,” *Balkan Transitional Justice*, January 4, 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/state-parliament-s-return-makes-some-croats-uneasy-12-31-2015>.

3 Here the term (historical) revisionism is understood as a practice of radical reinterpretation of the past that is unequally founded on the penchant for therapeutic values over cognitive values. Like Aviezer Tucker, I understand it as revised historiography that is immune to the effect of evidence (see Tucker 2008: 3). Furthermore, the term is used here to describe the process of post-socialist radical reinterpretation of the most traumatic aspects of the past of Eastern European countries in the twentieth century. The term is, needless to say, inadequate. But for the time being I see no alternative. Negationism, monopolization of the memory, distortion of history, rewriting, reinventing, redefining, re-evaluating, re-reading, abusing, erasing, changing, colonizing, ... the past do not cover the whole spectrum, therefore the search for a more adequate term continues.

oration units by focusing exclusively on the crimes of the communist partisans. What is more, according to the most radical reinterpretations, there was no collaboration but rather an insurrection against the "communist terrorists" who "in the name of ... [the] communist commonwealth attacked their own nation."⁴ According to the revised interpretation, the source of collaboration (and hence the blame for it) is not the political, moral, or ideological project of the collaborators, but communism, revolution, and the resistance movement, which prompted the "counter" movement of the collaborators. The difference between the conditions in Slovenia and those in other transition/post-socialist/post-communist countries is mainly that the changing memorial landscape in Slovenia has a greater impact on the revision of public memory than other discourses.

In Slovakia, on the other hand, one of the central topics was the Tiso regime and collaboration with Nazi Germany (1939–45). At one point this even became a constitutional part of discussions about the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and Slovak independence struggles. Not to mention the discourse that constituted the building of the Slovak national identity and independent Slovak republic after 1993. In this connection, the critical approach to the communist past was regarded as lending objectivity to the "new history." This is probably one of the reasons for people like Timothy Snyder to believe that his Eastern European colleagues see the history of their countries as something "fundamentally different" and incompatible with the prevalent Western narratives. That is also the reason why he, almost in a paternalistic manner, speaks of provincialism and of national history that remains to be a dominant model in this part of Europe. And finally, this is why he believes that there most probably "never will be an East European site of memory."⁵ And he is right. There will never be an Eastern European site of memory because memory has become an essential European metaphor for victimhood. Every single nation in the region is a victim and its victimhood, as Egidijus Aleksandravičius would put it, "became politically privileged and emotionally acceptable for many, if not for all."

4 Justin Stanovnik, "Aktualni kulturnopolitični komentar."

5 All quotes are from Snyder, "Politics of History in Eastern Europe."

Even in Serbia, where the process of “repackaging of history”⁶ was heavily marked by mass renaming of the streets and the rehabilitation of the Chetnik leader Draža Mihajlović. What started as the renaming of the Belgrade Square of Brotherhood and Unity and continued with changing the names of more than one hundred streets carrying the names of partisans and/or well-known communists, reached the peak with systematic “relativization of the anti-fascist resistance in Yugoslavia.”⁷ The last phase of this process was the Serbian Supreme Court’s decision to rehabilitate the leader of the Serbian Chetniks. Critics of Serbian historical and historiographical revisionism are particularly skeptical about “the changing of the past, guided by open or hidden motives to justify the narrow national and political goals.”⁸ Some of them even started to frame it as the “bastard product of neo-traditional historical science.”⁹ A majority of them,¹⁰ however, stress the need for differentiation between revision and revisionism, warning in particular of the overt “falsification, relativization, and explicit or implicit reinterpretation”¹¹ of the latter.

According to Ranko Končar, such “imagined pasts of some countries in the Western Balkans” are at times reminiscent of “retrospective fatalism [...] closer to mythical memory than critical historiography.” Special mention should also be made of the conclusion drawn by Drago Roksandić, who is convinced that “contemporary ‘revisionism in historiography’ [...] is a global phenomenon [...] deeply rooted in national (imperial) myths.”¹² Moreover, according to Roksandić, “post-Yugoslav regional contexts of historical revisionism epitomize continental European contexts.”¹³

This is also confirmed by the 2015 commemorations of the watershed events in the twentieth century around the world. Following the

6 Dragosavac, “Prepakivanje istorije” masovnim preimenovanjem beogradskih ulica.”

7 Končar, “Nekoliko zapažanja o pojavama revizionizma u srpskoj istoriografiji,” 37.

8 Kuljić, *Prevladavanje prošlosti*, 441.

9 Roksandić, “Historijski revizionizam,” 29.

10 Here I refer to Olivera Milosavljević, Olga Manojlović Pintar, Srđan Milošević, Todor Kuljić, Vladimir Petrović, Drago Roksandić, Ranko Končar, and the late Andrej Mitrović.

11 Milošević, “Istorijski revizionizam i društveni kontekst,” 19.

12 Roksandić, “Historijski revizionizam,” 29.

13 Ibid.

seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, the beginning of August was marked by the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The anniversary of the first use of a nuclear weapon was rendered a shade more painful by the fact that 80,000 civilian lives were lost in a single moment. A sense of triumph gave way to sadness, regret, and despair. The inability of Japanese political representatives—from the emperor to the prime minister—to apologize to China and South Korea for the crimes Japan had committed seven decades ago led an eighty-year-old Korean man (Choi Hiun Yeol) to set himself on fire in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

Something entirely different, however, took place at celebrations marking the end of World War II in Europe, where two patterns of commemorations overlapped more than ever before. The satisfaction with the victory over fascism was, for the second time in the last decade, drowned by the calls for a thorough reinterpretation of the role (and responsibility) of either individual perpetrators or the whole movements/groups. Moreover, in countries where the fascist and Nazi occupation led to civil wars in which an important part was also played by local pro-Nazi and pro-fascist collaborationist forces, the question of responsibility has reached an unprecedented peak, further aggravated by the memory of the end of conflicts in former Yugoslavia, where the Croatian triumph over Serbian paramilitary units in 1995 totally eclipsed the aftermath of the war, which, thanks to the local elites, took on an explicitly ethnic character.

The rhetoric interspersed with slogans of the fascist Ustasha regime during the summer commemoration in Knin in 2015 even led Serbian protesters to burn the Croatian flag in front of the Croatian Embassy in Belgrade. The spiral of tensions, which has to the greatest possible extent fed on deliberate abuse of the past, was further exacerbated by the Croatian diplomatic note, followed by more protests in Belgrade. If we also recall the drone flying the Albanian flag over the football stadium during the match between Serbia and Albania in Belgrade (2015) or the riots of Croatian football fans (Swastika on the pitch in Split) at the end of the same year, things became even more complicated. What is particularly striking is that neither new interpretations of World War II nor new commemorative practices relating to the end of

the so-called Patriotic War display not even a hint of self-reflection. Each side views itself as the victim and the other side as the perpetrator—Croats point at Serbs and Serbs (regardless of their evident crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina) point at Croats and Bosniaks.

It seems that the year of anniversaries has taken the systematic reinterpretation of perpetrators into victims to a new height by opening what Danish historian Christian Nielsen calls “the Victim Olympics.” In the representation of past traumas, neither side wants to understand the other. As stressed by the Nielsen’s Croatian colleague Vjeran Pavlaković, the lack of empathy primarily stems from systematic translation of perpetrators into victims.¹⁴ His understanding of the process under discussion led him to similar conclusions as those of Aleida Assmann, who speaks of the passive identity of victim, based on non-recognition of any shared responsibility for the committed crimes. What is more, the function of self-victimization is not only running away from the responsibility of perpetrators but also avoiding any “politics of remorse.”¹⁵

This is one of the problems addressed in the chapters that follow. Like Pavlaković, some other authors¹⁶ in the region draw attention to the startling changes in understanding the past and the future. In the 1980s the majority of those who fought for the democratization of the regime also anticipated a general democratization of the interpretation of the past. Or, as Pavlaković puts it, they anticipated a look toward the future and development projects. But what took place was precisely the opposite: “themes from the past have re-emerged,”¹⁷ while endeavors to embrace modern trends in historiography, reconstruction of the past of marginalized (ethnic, gender, economic) groups, and especially endeavors for what Reinhardt Kosselleck called “history in the plural,” have been replaced by the renewed exclusivist nationalization of historical interpretation.

This is why some of the authors of this book (Radonić, Kuljić, Michela, Filandra, Luthar, etc.) build on the failed liberalization and new

¹⁴ Pavlaković in Jorgačević, “Pad imuniteta na fašizam.”

¹⁵ Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur*, 148.

¹⁶ Bojan Godeša (Ljubljana), Neven Budak (Zagreb), Nikolai Vukov (Sofia), Ana Panić (Belgrade), Michal Kopeček (Prague), Elena Mannova (Bratislava), just to name a few.

¹⁷ Pavlaković in Jorgačević, “Pad imuniteta na fašizam.”

politics of the past while tracing the dissipated energy of the revolutionary 1980s. This part includes a short reconstruction of the reception of historiographical trends and makes it possible to demonstrate why the unanticipated regression in the interpretation of the past or the abovementioned renationalization occurred. The latter is, after all, closely connected to the political uses of the past, which took by surprise even the youngest generation of historians. By this we refer to university professors who completed their studies after the end of socialism and realize that "the war and trauma (still) sell well" in the former socialist countries.¹⁸ This generation therefore finds it slightly harder to comprehend why those who obliterate the differences between perpetrators and victims often invoke national identity and the lack of "shared memory."¹⁹

On the other hand, the authors openly stress that much like the war, occupation, collaboration, and resistance constituted a process that marked a vast part of Europe, the current (changes in) commemorative practices, too, are an all-European phenomenon. This also holds for the discussions on victims and perpetrators. Over the past decade, the latter have not only been the common denominator of the political debates in Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe, but have underlined the culture of remembering throughout the continent. Nonetheless, we should be mindful of the opinion stated by the aforementioned Drago Roksandić, who firmly believes that "all complexities that make up Europe find nowhere a more vivid expression than in Southeastern Europe."²⁰

The extent to which it is possible to agree with the latter is illustrated by two chapters that address the examples of historical revisionism in Central Europe. Both the analysis of the reinterpretation of Slovak collaboration led by Slovak president Tiso (Michela), and the case of Hungarian negationism in relation to the destruction of the Jewish community in Budapest (Laczó) lead to the conclusion

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Leiler, Ženja, "Brane Senegačnik: 'Lahko se samo aklimatiziraš ali pa se izseliš'" (interview with Brane Senegačnik), *Delo*, July 25, 2015, <http://www.delo.si/kultura/knjiga/brane-senegacnik-lahko-se-samo-aklimatiziras-ali-pa-se-izselis.html>.

²⁰ Roksandić, "Historijski revizionizam," 29.

that the “New Europe,” memories and remembering have become crucial for producing and understanding a series of phenomena in everyday life strategies that figure as fundamental driving forces in creating and reshaping contemporary individual, local, national, and transnational identities.

A similar opinion is expressed by some other authors who find that after the fall of socialism, the attempts to reach national reconciliation were coupled with radical reconfigurations and reinterpretations of the past to negotiate local, national, and transnational identities and to strengthen national agendas. In most former socialist countries, the historical interpretation significantly resembles the struggle over the legitimacy and authenticity of this representation. The revisionist approach to the past has become not only the site of struggles over the meanings of past events and structures, but also a part of the new quest for the ideal “we” of the present. What appears to be a discussion about the past and a reconstruction of historical truth reveals more about the present fragility and plurality of identities and politics aimed at fixing the definition of national identity. In short, it is a struggle over the interpretative resources within a society.

The first years of democratization were also followed by a rise in a tendency to convert and transvalue traumatic events, which gave way to the establishment of the so-called founding traumas. The placement of the struggle for the reinterpretation of the past within the sociological concept of “national trauma” is important, since it provides a theoretical framework for the treatment of the so-called cultural struggle, which lies in the background of the reinterpretation of collaboration and links the struggle for memory to the problem of collective identity. This is used in historical and sociological analyses of the same sorts of phenomena elsewhere (i.e., the collective trauma of the Nazi perpetrators as the basis of German postwar national identity, the trauma of the Holocaust victims, and so on). Placing a particular Serbian, Croatian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Hungarian, Slovak, or Slovenian case into a series of related problems is of key importance for understanding it as a part of what was going on in other parts of Central and Southeastern Europe. Meanwhile, from an academic perspective, the “unique phenomenon” approach allows for a non-theoretical, episte-

mologically non-reflexive and politicized treatment of the past, and a struggle for memory in the present.

In addition, less than a decade after the release of the reference volume edited by Michal Kopeček, it has become clear that historical revision, "far from being restricted to small groups of 'deniers,'"²¹ has not just galvanized but literally colonized the debates in the realm of recent history.

This is precisely the main reason why the authors of this book started the discussion several years ago. They, too, believed that without a critical analysis of the post-socialist revision project, the professional debate on the nature of historical explanation was largely overshadowed by the new attempts to monopolize historical interpretation. Besides, they argued that the vivid interest in the new forms of historical representation, which accompanied the 1980s struggle for democratization, gave way to politicized reinterpretation of the most disputed parts of national history, of World War II and the time of socialism.

The case studies presented in this book also show that studying the enactment of collective memory in everyday life enables one to approach significant aspects of social realities that would otherwise go unnoticed, including relationships to the past, identity management, and practices of citizenship.

From a methodological aspect, the ongoing "repackaging of history" builds on a sort of *descriptive self-sufficient mode of interpretation*²² of which selective positivism is the extreme form.

The most important characteristics of this model include: (a) focus on the national framework, (b) ignoring the chronology of events or dehistoricization of the past, and (c) moralization.

In the analysis of the latter, a name also appears that serves as the title of the book. After 2010, some historians began to assign the met-

²¹ Kopeček, *Past in the Making*, ix.

²² According to Dominic LaCapra, who distinguishes between two approaches to historiography, the first approach is what he calls a documentary or self-sufficient research model and the second one—which is the negative mirror of the first one—is that of radical constructivism. The second one has received its most articulate defenders in such important figures as Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit, who accept the distinction between historical and fictional statements on the level of reference to events, but question it on the structural level. See LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 1–8.

aphorical label “red dragon and the evil spirits” to communism and its alleged advocates. This group indiscriminately includes anyone who opposes complete equation of Nazism, fascism and communism, and/or acts against the rearranging of responsibility for collaborating with the Nazis and fascists during World War II. This narrative, usually full of metaphors, is also slowly but persistently undermining the role of historians who have been traditionally regarded as providing the facts for “objective” interpretations. Here, the term “objective” is understood in the sense of “strategy of objectification,” which, according to LaCapra, “induces a denial of transferential implication in the object of study and obviates the problem of actual.”²³ Such an objectifying strategy may “assume a radical divide between objectivity and subjectivity and lead to [...] obscuring the voices of the dead.”²⁴ By seeing the past only in terms of contemporary uses, the revisionists/negationists not only eliminate “the diachronic weight of the past,”²⁵ but also misuse the after-effect of trauma. This is what LaCapra would call “the numbing of trauma.” This kind of post-truth historiography cannot come to terms with the wound and the scars of the past. It does not seek knowledge, it does not empathetically expose the self, but sticks with a one-dimensional revision of the past.

What is more, the post-1991 revisionist or post-factual interpretation of World War II and socialism is directly responsible for the growing gap between historical interpretation and politics of history. Instead of prompting the necessary debate about the relationship between morality and politics, the influence of the moralizing discourse increases up to a level that seriously influences the political lives of post-socialist countries.²⁶ Among those who created and reproduced this kind of discourse are many former communists, each day becoming more like what John Williams would describe as “most useless and contemptible creatures” who expend their “energies upon making judgments rather than upon gaining knowledge.”²⁷

²³ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 39.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See also Laczó, “The Many Moralists and the Few Communists.”

²⁷ Williams, *Augustus*, 128.

CHAPTER

1

On the (In)convertibility of National Memory into European Legitimacy: The Bulgarian Case

Daniela Koleva

“Is it possible to predict the future,” radio Yerevan¹ was asked. “Of course”—was the answer.—“That is quite easy. The problem is with the past, it is the one that keeps changing.”

The following chapter focuses on the public memory of the recent past (World War II and its aftermath) in Bulgaria. Taking the joke seriously, I start with the constructivist assumption that the messages of the past do not spontaneously emanate from it, but rather are coined in the present to respond to current needs and interests. The past therefore “keeps changing” as a consequence of the politics of history that not only seek to negotiate the narratives about the past but also to legitimize social and political actors and their causes in the present. From this perspective, I will try to track down two simultaneous but diverging tendencies in the current Bulgarian memory constructs: what might be considered (re)nationalization of memory, and its Europeanization.

1 Radio Yerevan (or Armenian radio) is the “protagonist” of a series of (mostly) political jokes in the former Eastern bloc. This one follows their typical Q&A structure but its topic suggests a post-Soviet/post-communist origin.

We are used to considering memory in national frames and remain skeptical about the existence, or even possibility, of an uncontested European memory.² There has been talk of a “revival of the national paradigm in Europe” and of the emergence of a “post-classical national master narrative after 1989.”³ It is tempting—and in many cases correct—to make sense of the post-communist rethinking of the past as a renationalization filling in the ideological vacuum left after the demise of Marxism-Leninism and the shattering of the master narrative of anti-fascism, especially in the post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet countries.⁴ In other cases, however, such as Bulgaria and Romania, the tendency toward nationalization of the historical narratives began much earlier, already in the 1960s, and gained considerable momentum by the late 1980s.

In spite of the predominance of the “national paradigm,” recent research has argued that transnational memory is nevertheless possible, not necessarily as a common narrative, alternative to local and national remembrance, or even as shared *lieux de mémoire* or “circles” of memory.⁵ Rather, it may well be a supranational space where diverging memories are expressed and dealt with⁶ or a kind of standard, a reference point for a critical rethinking of the past.⁷

In the following, I offer an overview of the institutional framework that has set the stage for the cultivation of the present Bulgarian culture of remembrance in a European context. I also focus on the most common test case of “negative memory” (Koselleck)—the Holocaust, and the specificity of the Bulgarian debates.

2 Pakier and Strath, *A European Memory?*

3 Berger, “National Historiographies in Transnational Perspective,” 3.

4 See, for example, Karlsson, “The Uses of History and the Third Wave of Europeanisation,” 39; Luthar in this volume.

5 Leggewie, “Seven Circles of European Memory.”

6 Sierp, *History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity*.

7 Müller, “On ‘European Memory’”; Radonić, “Standards of Evasion” and this volume.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE MEMORY OF WORLD WAR II AND ITS AFTERMATH

Western Standards and Eastern Strategies

Starting with the Nuremberg trials, European societies have found a number of ways to deal with totalitarian pasts, including Nazism, fascism, and communism. A study authorized by the European Commission (EC) revealed a wide variety of approaches, legal provisions, and practices in dealing with the crimes of totalitarian regimes and keeping memories of them alive.⁸ These have most often been implemented by national governments in conformity with, and with the support of, European bodies.⁹ The memory of the Holocaust—the European negative foundational narrative—established itself as a main reference and model for the measures of dealing with the communist past. The new democracies in Eastern Europe followed this model in seeking justice for the victims and perpetrators of their former regimes, in introducing truth-seeking mechanisms and commemorative practices. These processes have therefore been associated with a tendency toward the equation of communism and Holocaust noted by Tzvetan Todorov¹⁰ already in the wake of the velvet revolutions, when he distinguished four types of reactions to the comparison of Nazism and Stalinism: the victims of Stalinism tended toward the equation of the two regimes because it functioned for them as accusation, while its executors were anxious to keep the demarcation between them (being the target of the accusation). Ironically, victims of Nazism turned out to be their “allies” in insisting on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, while perpetrators of Nazism did not mind the equation, thus siding with the victims of Stalinism, because it functioned as a kind of vindication for them.

While in Todorov’s observations “victims” and “perpetrators” stand for positions and discourses, East-European politicians have

8 Montero, *Study on How the Memory of Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes in Europe Is Dealt with in the Member States*.

9 *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council*.

10 Todorov, “Zloupotrebite s pametta,” 10.

consistently upheld the parallel with Nazism, especially after their countries' full membership in the European Union (EU), which opened new opportunities for cooperation also in the field of remembrance.¹¹ The position of European institutions has been ambivalent: while the post-communist countries' right to memory has been eloquently recognized,¹² their memory narratives have not been (fully) endorsed. One telling example is the consistent preference of the term "Stalinism" rather than "communism" in European documents such as the Declaration on the Proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (2008), which otherwise tends toward an equation of the two regimes. Another sign of this tendency are the references to both regimes as "totalitarian" in various official publications (e.g., the *Resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism* 2009¹³; PACE resolutions¹⁴; Montero, *Study on How the Memory of Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes in Europe Is Dealt with in the Member States*; EU research

11 The most significant result so far is perhaps the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism ("Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism," Prague Declaration, June 3, 2008, <http://www.pragedeclaration.eu>), which starts with a parallel of the two regimes and outlines the basic principles of the politics of memory in relation to communism. Earlier, however, the equation of the two regimes was articulated in the establishment of institutions or commissions to investigate Nazi and Soviet crimes (Poland, Lithuania, Estonia), of museums equating the two historical traumas (the House of Terror in Budapest, the Museums of Occupations in Tallinn and Riga), of bans on Nazi and Soviet symbols (Baltic states), and the passing of laws against the denial of communist crimes on a par with Holocaust denial (Hungary).

12 In the context of the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II, the European Parliament adopted a resolution ("The Future of Europe Sixty Years after the Second World War," European Parliament, May 12, 2005, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT/TA/P6-TA-2005-01800/DOC XML Vo//EN>) that acknowledged the "magnitude of the suffering, injustice and long-term social, political and economic degradation endured by the captive nations located on the eastern side of what was to become the Iron Curtain."

13 "European Conscience and Totalitarianism," European Parliament, April 2, 2009, 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT/TA/P6-TA-2009-0213/DOC XML Vo//EN>.

14 PACE Resolutions No. 1096 ("Resolution No. 1096—Measures to Dismantle the Heritage of Former Communist Totalitarian Systems," Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, June 28, 1996, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=16507>) and 1481 ("Resolution No. 1481—Need for International Condemnation of Crimes of Totalitarian Communist Regimes," Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, January 25, 2006, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=16507>). For details on the Bulgarian perspective on these documents, see Stanilov, *Pamet za utre*; Stanilov, *Istoriata na edin dokument: 1481/2006*.

funding programs¹⁵; etc.).¹⁶ However, a cursory look at the titles of the projects funded by Action 4—Active European Remembrance of the *Europe for Citizens* program, singled out as the main EU financial instrument for support and promotion of the memory of totalitarian crimes,¹⁷ reveals that c. 40 percent of the supported projects are explicitly focused on Holocaust and Nazism, 8–9 percent on communism, while another c. 6 percent deal with both regimes.¹⁸ However incomplete and superficial, these statistics seem to point to an imbalance reflective of international pressures on Eastern and Central European states to construct public memories of World War II in conformity with “the norms of global Holocaust memory.”¹⁹ Many social actors in these countries have perceived this memory politics as West-centric and unreciprocated by incorporating communism into (Western) European memory, which remained founded on the centrality and the uniqueness of the Holocaust. While the processes of joining NATO and the EU have demanded “memory work” along these lines for international audiences, EU membership has left East Central Europe caught between two divergent memory politics: the “politics of regret” (Olick) as a normative model and the politics of national martyrdom (or “nationalization of suffering” as Oto Luthar has aptly defined it), not only contesting the uniqueness of Nazi crimes but also projecting guilt outside their own community (to the Nazis, the Soviets, the communists, the state security, etc.). While the latter has been criticized—and rightly so (e.g., Luthar in this volume)—as historical revisionism and distortion of the past with a nationalist bias, it has

15 The FP7 Collaboration Programme announced a topic on “Democracy and the Shadows of Totalitarianism and Populism: The European Experience” and the text refers explicitly to “tackling the post-totalitarian memory and heritage of regimes which held power in different European countries before, during and after WWII” (“Work Programme 2010. Cooperation. Theme 8: Socioeconomic Sciences and Humanities,” European Commission, July 29, 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/fp7/89059/h_wp_201001_en.pdf).

16 On the other hand, Russia’s position has been unequivocal: in 2009, President Medvedev set up a Commission to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia’s Interests.

17 *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council*, 7.

18 “Europe for Citizens Programme,” European Commission—Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/results_compendia/results_en.php. The remaining titles either point to other themes (such as the post-Yugoslav wars) or do not contain a clue as to the period under consideration.

19 Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, 96.

also been viewed from a different historical-political perspective: as a phase of the memory work in post-communist countries aiming to undo the distortions of history favored during the communist period²⁰ and, more generally, as an attempt to integrate the “subaltern” or “minority” pasts of Eastern Europeans into the mnemonic landscape of today’s Europe.²¹ The very notion of “subaltern” signals a geopolitical asymmetry and suggests that this memoryscape is a space of struggle and contestation rather than harmony. Highlighting common history and shared values has been rendered problematic by demands for recognition of past injustice and reparation for past suffering.

Not only have post-communist societies failed to inscribe their experiences of their recent past onto the European memoryscape; they have not (yet?) managed to produce a stable and coherent memory narrative, similar to the one in the West, a narrative of a resolved past. Therefore these societies, no matter how different from each other, share an intense emphasis on the past in struggles to de- or relegitimize versions of their historical narratives. Memory entrepreneurs in these countries align interests across borders to institutionalize a transnational consensus.²² Thus the processes of Europeanization become ever more important, and at the same time seem to be more complex and multi-layered than a “setting of standards” and smooth integration into existing (“Western”) mnemonic regimes; they already also imply a certain “memorial militancy,”²³ that is, claims to memory and versions of memory that draw their normative power from other sources. So the Europe of remembrances seems to become somewhat heterocentric. More than that, it seems that the West-East migration of concepts like memory, trauma, victimhood, guilt, and repentance calls for their re-contextualization and rethinking.

20 Challand, “1989, Contested Memories and the Shifting Cognitive Maps of Europe,” 399.

21 Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European.”

22 Examples of this are the Platform for European Memory and Conscience (“Agreement and Statute,” Platform of European Memory and Conscience, December 7, 2011, <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/official-documents-of-the-european-parliament/statute-and-agreement>), established in 2011 in Prague, and the European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity (“About Us,” European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity, <http://www.enrs.eu/en/about-us>).

23 Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European,” 656.

Memory Politics and Institutions of Memory: Focus on Bulgaria

While the European documents conform to the moral obligation to acknowledge the suffering of others, their declarative character implies that whatever practical measures would be undertaken would have to be based on national legislatures. The latter have been developed in several directions: condemnation of the communist regimes; justice for the victims and the perpetrators; fact-finding and study of the recent past; and its commemoration.

In this context, the Bulgarian Parliament adopted in 2000 a Law on Declaring the Criminal Nature of the Communist Regime in Bulgaria,²⁴ which however had no actual legal consequences. A Declaration for the 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Communist Regime in Bulgaria followed on September 9, 2004.²⁵ The Declaration stated that “unlawful acts, violence and mass murders were committed” in the postwar period, which suggested the type of liability of the perpetrators. In this case as well, the search for responsibility was once again more declarative and moral than it was judicial. Secondly, coping with totalitarian pasts has included measures to do justice to the victims: their identification and location, their exoneration/rehabilitation, restitution of their property and monetary compensations/indemnities. A number of related acts were adopted in the early 1990s, such as the Law on Amnesty and Release from Serving a Term of Imprisonment (1990), the Law on Amnesty and Return of Property (1991), the Law on Political and Civil Vindication of Re-

24 *Darzhaven vestnik* [The State Gazette] no. 37, May 5, 2000. The act declared in Article 1.1 that “BCP [the Bulgarian Communist Party] is responsible for the rule of the state from September 9, 1944 until November 10, 1989, which led the country to national catastrophe.” Article 2 enumerated ten specific responsibilities of BCP: annihilation of the traditional values of the European civilization, violation of basic human rights and freedoms, dealing with the deputies of the Twenty-Fifth National Assembly and many others through the mechanism of the so-called People’s Court; the moral and economic decline of the state; the directive management of the economic life; abolishment of the right to property; encroachment on the religious liberty; unceasing terror against those, who disagreed with the system; abuse with the upbringing, education, science and culture for political and ideological purposes; ruthless destruction of the nature.

25 “Deklaratsii,” Narodno Sabranie Na Republika Balgariya, <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/declaration/ID/5186>.

pressed Persons (1991), the Law on Restoring the Property on Nationalized Real Estates (1992), the Law on Ownership and Use of Agricultural Land (1991), which envisaged the dismantling of the kolkhoz-type agricultural collectives and restitution of the agricultural land to its owners or their heirs.²⁶

The transitional justice measures in Bulgaria have been mostly victim-oriented. Although the UN convention on the non-applicability of statutory limitations to war crimes and crimes against humanity has led to modifications of the criminal codes of some post-communist states, such as Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania,²⁷ the amendments of the Bulgarian Criminal Code introduced between 1990 and 1993 were exclusively meant to eliminate politically motivated punishments rather than introduce new rules applicable to perpetrators of the communist repressions.

In spite of this, and although the newly established anti-communist opposition lost the elections in 1990 to the former communist party (by that time already renamed socialist), the early 1990s saw heated debates on communist crimes followed by some measures of transitional justice. A parliamentary commission to investigate the crimes in the communist camps was established in 1990, and a case was filed by the Military Prosecutor's office for fourteen murders in the camp near Lovech. Although the issue of prescription was not legally settled, legal proceedings started against four officers from the camp and the former vice-minister of the Interior responsible for the camps. In the subsequent years however, all but one of the defendants died and the case was closed. What the prosecution managed to achieve was some publicity, quite important for the collective framing of the memory of the camps. This result is quite similar to the situation in other countries, where such trials also failed in their intended role as "executors of post-revolutionary justice" but instead contributed to the shaping of the new memory.²⁸

26 Analysts usually point to the negative effect of this act (in the short term at least) on the agricultural sector. While this may very well have been the case, such assessments ignore the aspect of transitional justice in the motivation of this act.

27 Montero, *Study on How the Memory of Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes in Europe Is Dealt with in the Member States*, 164–69.

28 Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, 31.

Another form of transitional justice has been the measures to suspend communist nomenclature cadres from occupying high positions in various public sectors, known as “lustration.” A couple of lustration laws were passed by the Bulgarian Parliament in the 1990s, most notably in university education and research institutions. Similar measures were included in the Law on Public Administration (1997) but they were later revoked by the Constitutional Court. In preparation for Bulgaria’s membership in NATO, the Law on Classified Information was passed in 2002, ruling that the State Commission on Information Security should screen public servants who apply to work with NATO classified information. On the eve of Bulgaria’s full membership in the EU, in December 2006, the Commission for Disclosure of the Documents and for Announcement of Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security (known as Com-Dos) was established with a mandate to check the affiliation to State Security of all holders and candidates for public positions and to ensure access to the files of the former State Security. Although the Commission works very well, its findings have not lead to actual suspension of former State Security agents from their offices because of inconsistencies in the legislature. Therefore, there has been a considerable degree of continuity between present and former (communist) elites.

Since the end of the twentieth century, transitional societies—such as the post-authoritarian ones in Latin America and post-apartheid South Africa—have worked out mechanisms for truth-seeking, reconciliation, and elaborating new consensual narratives of the past. In post-communist Europe, however, Truth Commissions have had limited existence, and the idea of “reconciliation” has most often been propagated by former elites to cover up their actions rather than reveal them (at least according to popular attitudes). Two other types of institutions however emerged: history commissions (to elaborate new historical narratives) and institutes of “national memory” (to house state security files and do research based on them). The first type of institutions exist in the Baltic states and Romania, the second—in Poland, Hungary, Germany, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Lithuania.²⁹ They have been in different situations regarding their re-

29 Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, 32–60.

lations with the respective governments, with some managing to maintain considerable independence, and others, on the contrary, turning into subsidiaries to the political elites in their countries. In Bulgaria, the above mentioned ComDos is such an institution, which, among other tasks, has committed itself to the publication of archival sources.³⁰ Indeed, the most important step toward the study of the communist past has been the so-called archival revolution, which is granting access to the archives. However, while the archives were de-classified and made available for research, the Bulgarian state did not deem it necessary to establish or sponsor a research institution to study communism. The existing projects have been carried by teams of researchers and independent institutions³¹ without dedicated support from the National Research Council or any other state body.

As far as the commemoration of World War II and communist past is concerned, the Bulgarian state has been even more conspicuously absent. While the communist commemorative calendar was abandoned, honoring the victims of communism remained largely limited to the sporadic activities of political and civic organizations, and monuments to them were left to the discretion of local authorities in response to civic initiatives. Recent history is not taught at school, and the public interest in it seldom goes beyond historians' debates. No museum of communism has been established, except the Museum of Socialist Art, a branch of the National Art Gallery, which opened in September 2011 only to stir discussions about what was seen as an uncritical agenda contributing to the rehabilitation of the communist regime, or at best, politics of avoidance.³² The approach to communist monuments has remained piecemeal and inconsistent. As a result, the memoryscapes—that is, the spatial arrangements and visual/material commemorative signs of the past, anchoring a *lieu de memoire* to a physical place—have in some cases become quite ambivalent: the com-

30 "Nashite Izdaniya," ComDos, http://www.comdos.bg/Нашите_издания.

31 Most important, the Institute for the Study of the Recent Past in Sofia (<http://minaloto.org>). See also the special portal on the study of communism supported by the Centre for Advanced Study in Sofia (<http://red.cas.bg>). The private New Bulgarian University has executed a project for online publication of documents from the archive of the Bulgarian Communist Party (<http://www.nbu.bg/webs/historyproject/index.htm>).

32 Vukov, "The Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia and the Politics of Avoidance."

mon sites of memory of communism are not sites of common (i.e., consensual) memory.

While in the other new EU member states the principle of conditionality has been used for the establishment of a consensual narrative of the recent past, this has not been the case in Bulgaria. This situation may look advantageous, giving a chance for free and open discussions of the recent past—something that scholars intrinsically value—but it actually prevents a broad debate. There is an air of quasi-reconciliationism based on avoidance, without the confession, apology, and forgiveness needed for a real reconciliation. It does not invite competing versions and an open and constructive working out of a narrative of the past. What is lacking are the moral and normative conditions necessary for a sustained public and professional debate. The Bulgarian way into the EU and NATO steered away from a dialogue about the country's communist past and a moral and civic consensus based on it. The past is not resolved, and this lack of composure has led not just to a *Historikerstreit* in the academic circles (which in itself is no reason for complaint), but to a general disorientation regarding the values on which the social contract of the present should rest. My thesis is that this disorientation has affected the ways in which Bulgarians (not researchers) today consider a number of aspects of the recent past and the ways in which these memories lend themselves to political uses and manipulations.

In the following section, I focus on the fate of the Bulgarian Jews in World War II and the construction of a narrative about it. It is worth noting in this instance that the Bulgarian state has not withdrawn, but has—through its institutions and high-level representatives—actively participated in launching a narrative. Thus, I hope to expand from the role of transitional justice for the shaping of memory to broader social and political processes related to it.

THE BULGARIAN HOLOCAUST AND THE POLITICAL USES OF MEMORY

A wave of action has swept across Central and Eastern Europe in the last two decades to help face the extermination of Jews during World War II and the complicity of local populations: the commemoration of

the fiftieth anniversary of Babi Yar massacre in 1991; President Brazauskas' official apology in 1995 for Lithuanian atrocities against Jews (triggering negative reactions in Lithuanian media); the introduction of a Holocaust memorial day in Hungary in 2001 (April 16, the establishment of the Budapest ghetto); the official Polish apology in the same year for the Jedwabne massacre; the introduction of the topic of Holocaust into school curricula in the early 2000s; and so on. All these have been part of a "memory work" needed in the course of European integration and, more broadly, part of what Klas-Göran Karlsson has called "canonisation of the Holocaust"³³ in terms of both sacralization and formation of a European memory canon (i.e., not only what is remembered, but how). The Bulgarian response to this Europeanization of memory has been somewhat different.

Historical Background: The Bulgarian Jewry in World War II

As an ally of Nazi Germany during World War II, Bulgaria adopted harsh anti-Semitic legislation. In early 1941, the Law on the Protection of the Nation was passed imposing an array of repressive measures on Bulgarian Jews: they were deprived of the right to vote, were subject to curfew, excluded from jobs in the public sector, their properties and economic activities were curtailed, and their access to university education was restricted. A special Commissariat on Jewish Affairs (CJA) was established to implement the law. Later that year, following German attacks on Greece and Yugoslavia, the Bulgarian Army occupied large parts of Vardar Macedonia and Aegean Thrace (Northern Greece). The propaganda of the time hailed this act as "liberation" and "unification" of the country, and the Bulgarian Parliament granted Bulgarian citizenship to the population of the newly "liberated" regions with the exception of the Jews (the Law on the Protection of the Nation prohibited the naturalization of persons of Jewish origin). Nevertheless, the latter were subject to the provisions of the anti-Semitic Bulgarian legislature, including a one-time 20 percent tax on their properties.

33 Karlsson, "The Uses of History and the Third Wave of Europeanisation," 40.

The pro-Nazi Bulgarian government led by Bogdan Filov signed an agreement to deport 20,000 Jews to the death camps in occupied Poland—about 12,000 from the “new territories” and about 8,000 from “old Bulgaria,” mainly “politically undesirable” persons. The deportation was regarded as the first step toward “the final solution,” to be followed by that of the rest of Bulgarian Jews, totaling almost 50,000 at the time. In March 1943, 11,343 Jews from Vardar Macedonia, Aegean Thrace, and Pirot were transported to the death camps in occupied Poland, and only twelve of them survived. In the “old territories,” however, a campaign in defense of the Jews started, initiated by influential figures among the intellectuals, oppositional politicians, and the higher ranks of the Orthodox clergy.³⁴ Most notably, the vice-chair of the Parliament Dimitar Peshev and forty-two members of parliament (MPs) sent a protest note to Prime Minister Filov, which revealed the secret plans for the deportation. As a result, Bulgarian Jews from the “old territories” avoided deportation to the Nazi death camps. However, most of the Jews living in Sofia were interned to other towns while able-bodied men were subject to labor service, that is, they were forced into labor camps.³⁵ The repressions were probably an additional factor triggering support for the communist movement among the Jewish population, together with strong Zionist attitudes. Two tendencies developed in parallel among the Bulgarian Jewry in the first years after World War II: to integrate into the postwar Bulgarian society as a “model minority,” and to emigrate and establish a sovereign Jewish state. The latter was overwhelming, leading to a drastic reduction of the Jewish minority in Bulgaria by the early 1950s.³⁶

Rescue or Holocaust?

Beginning in the 1960s, the fate of Bulgarian Jewry became more and more instrumentalized by the communist regime to boost its international image. The “rescue” (or “salvation”) of the Bulgarian Jews was

³⁴ Kohen, *Otseliavaneto/The Survival*.

³⁵ Vassileva, *Evreite v Bulgaria 1944–1952*; Kohen, *Otseliavaneto/The Survival*.

³⁶ Between October 1948 and May 1949, 32,106 Bulgarian Jews emigrated to Israel and less than 10,000 stayed in Bulgaria. Since then, due to emigration and low birth rate, their numbers slowly went on diminishing, reaching 6,431 persons in 1956 (Vassileva, *Evreite v Bulgaria 1944–1952*).

attributed to the Bulgarian people led by the working class with the role of the general secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party Todor Zhivkov increasingly (and fraudulently) highlighted. Thus, the “salvation narrative,” grounded in the dichotomy of “the tolerant people” versus “the fascist regime,” was a product of the regime’s politics of history. This narrative is still the dominant one in Bulgaria, even though the historical actors as well as the interpretations of their doings have multiplied due to the influences of international and transnational memory cultures, such as those of the Bulgarian diaspora and especially the Jewish community in Israel, of the descendants of Macedonian, and Thracian Jews, and certainly of the European memory canon.³⁷ The matter has become even more complicated in the context of the complex Bulgarian-Macedonian relations in the realm of history, and the Bulgarian sensitivity toward a number of Macedonian *lieux de mémoire*. In particular, Darko Mitrevski’s 2012 movie *Third Half* has given rise to bitter controversies. The movie and the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Skopje in 2011 have been seen by some vocal public figures in Bulgaria as part of politics of memory aiming to inaugurate a particular reading of Macedonian history with an anti-Bulgarian thrust.

The dynamics of the “salvation myth” in post-communist Bulgaria owes a lot to inner factors as well. While the democratic changes put an end to the narrative of the communist-led salvation, the dominant self-congratulating discourse has only occasionally and shyly been questioned. The “salvation” narrative not only persisted but was even assigned a role in the rewriting of Bulgarian twentieth century history and the redistribution of the symbolic capitals of the past. With anti-fascism as a major legitimating resource of the Bulgarian Communist Party (renamed Socialist in 1990), the question whether the regime prior and during World War II was fascist acquired major importance.³⁸ The lack of consensus on the communist regime further complicated the issue. Its historical and political aspects were (and still are) tightly intertwined. A comparative study of the “Jewish salvation”

37 See Troebst, “Spasenie, deportirane ili holokost?”

38 For a detailed discussion of the debates on fascism in Bulgarian historiography pre- and post-1989, see Elenkov and Koleva, “Historical Studies in Post-Communist Bulgaria,” 459–64.

theme in the party press of the 1990s has highlighted the influence of the political agendas on the interpretations: while the leftist voices stressed the deportation of the Jews from Macedonia and Thrace, insisting on the fascist nature of the regime and thus borrowing legitimacy from the international memory canon, the right wing focused on the rescue of the Jews from the “old territories,” insisting that the credit should not go to the communists but to the civil society, and thereby searching for traditions of tolerance and civic activism in pre-communist Bulgaria.³⁹ The figure of Dimitar Peshev was particularly suitable for the invention of such traditions. His proclamation as Righteous and the inauguration of his bust at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg lent international legitimacy to this side of the debate as well. On many occasions, the right-wing voices exhibited marked pro-monarchist tendencies, although direct evidence of the role of King Boris III is not available.

Julina Dadova-Mihailova notes the exclusion of Bulgarian Jews from this politicized debate and the development of a parallel Jewish one, where the collective memory and identity of the Bulgarian Jews was at stake.⁴⁰ The two clashed in 2000, after the decision of the Arbitration Committee of the Jewish National Fund to remove the plaques with the names of King Boris III and Queen Joanna from the Bulgarian Forest near Jerusalem following protests from descendants of the deported Jews from Macedonia and Thrace, who considered him to have been mainly responsible for the deportation.⁴¹ This was perhaps the trigger making the Jewish community in Bulgaria more vocal on the issue and able to draw the attention to the repressions, not only the survival—a telling concept used as title of an important compilation of documents.⁴² However, this discussion mostly took place in Bulgaria

39 Deyanova, “Postcommunist Negationism”; Deyanova, *Ochertania na malchanieto*, 152–69.

40 Dadova-Mihailova, “Spasiavaneto na bulgarskite evrei mezhdurazdno i realnostta.”

41 The protests were supported in October 1999 with a letter to the president of the state of Israel Ezer Weizman signed by the vice-chair of the Bulgarian Parliament and four MPs. This act triggered a debate in the Parliament on July 19, 2000, following the decision of the Arbitration Committee. The parliamentary debates on this occasion graphically illustrate the level of politicization of the issue and the rhetoric used (“Stenogrami ot plenarni zasidaniya,” Narodno Sabranie Na Republika Balgariya, July 19, 2000, <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenaryst/ns/51/ID/1499>).

42 Kohen, *Otseliavaneto/The Survival*.

in the Jewish community newspaper *Evreiski vesti* [Jewish news], and its visibility remained limited. A notable exception was Angel Wagenstein's speech at the Europalia festival in Brussels, published by the largest Bulgarian daily on the eve of the celebrations of the sixtieth anniversary of the "rescue" in March 1943.⁴³ Angel Wagenstein (b. 1922) is an author and film director,⁴⁴ participant in the communist resistance in the 1940s, subsequent member of the Bulgarian Communist Party, and a member of the Parliament from the Bulgarian Socialist Party in the early 1990s. His speech emphasized the deportation and highlighted the suffering of the Jews in Bulgaria proper, who were interned, their property confiscated, and the men mobilized for forced labor. He concluded that national dignity could not be based on silencing the truth, no matter how bitter it was. Inscripting itself into the "leftist" discourse, the speech was however made from the perspective of a witness and was a rare "Jewish voice" in the mainstream debate, provoking infuriated reactions. As Dadova-Mihailova observes, the collective memory of the Bulgarian Jews was grounded in the ideologue of the deserved salvation and in the self-perception as victims of the anti-Semitic legislature in the 1940s Bulgaria. Both depended on the recognition of the regime of the time as fascist.

Cursorily summarized, the bones of contention seem to be the following: the sovereignty of the Bulgarian state and the space for diplomatic maneuvering in the situation of a war alliance with Nazi Germany, largely perceived as unbalanced; the sharing of responsibility for the repressions between various actors and levels of power: Nazis or Bulgarian authorities, the King, the government, the CJA, its head Alexander Belev, and so on; the sharing of credit for the rescue: the King, the government, the parliamentary opposition, the civil society, and the Orthodox Church.⁴⁵

43 Wagenstein, "Spasi li Bulgaria vsichkite si evrei?"

44 Most important for the current topic, he authored the script of the movie *Stars* (1959, director Konrad Wolf), highlighting the role of the Bulgarian occupation authorities in the deportation in 1943.

45 These were among the main questions brought forth in a special discussion studio of the Bulgarian National Television in March 2013, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the "rescue" ("Istoriya BG - Spasyavaneto na balgarskite evrei," YouTube video, 59:42, posted by "adnogr2," March 4, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhFZzO3owBU>).

At the same time, some serious historiographical work has been done in the past few years. In her thorough review of Bulgarian and foreign research Nadya Danova identifies the conflicting interpretations of the documentary corpus, pointing out the tendency toward a more realistic and critical approach and the positive role of international exchange for its developing.⁴⁶ Recent research⁴⁷ provides enough arguments to comprehensively discuss and perhaps solve most of the contentious issues outlined above. A major collection of archival documents—a total of 609 documents on 1,750 pages—on the deportation of the Jews from Macedonia and Thrace⁴⁸ merits special mention in this respect. Unprecedented in its scope and richness, the collection sheds light on the life of the local Jewish communities under Bulgarian occupation, on the German-Bulgarian negotiations of their deportation and its organization by the Bulgarian administration, as well as on the confiscation and subsequent management of Jewish property.

However, research findings do not seem to have influenced the official “salvation” narrative and the public culture of remembrance to any significant extent. History textbooks for the last grade of secondary schools currently in use, show a remarkable unity on the question: the main narrative is about the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews. While the one from the late 1990s devotes only a few lines to the context of the “political crisis of 1943–1944,”⁴⁹ the textbooks from the early 2000s dedicate an entire section entitled “The rescue of the Bulgarian Jews.”⁵⁰

46 Danova, “Dalgata syanka na minaloto.”

47 Hadjiiski, *Sadbata na evreiskoto naselenie v Belomorska Trakia, Vardarska Makedonia i Yugozapadna Bulgaria prez. 1941–1944*; Paunovski and Ilet, *Evreite v Bulgaria mezhdu unishtozhenieto i spasenieto*; Poppetrov, “Zwischen grossen Erwartungen und bösem Erwachen”; Poppetrov, “Bulgarskoto obshtestvo i evreite (1879–1944): obshta postanovka”; Avramov, “Spasenie” i *padenie. Mikroekonomika na darzhavnia antisemitizam v Bulgaria 1940–1944*; Grozeva and Hristidi, *Evreite v Iztocna Evropa i Savetskia sayuz v godinite na Vtorata svetovna voina i Studenata voina (1939–1989)*; as well as a few publications of documents (Toshkova, *Bulgaria — svoenravniat sayuznik na Tretia raib*; Kohen, *Otseliavaneto/The Survival*; Peshev, *Spomeni*; Toshkova et al., *Obrecheni i spaseni. Bulgaria v antisemitskata programa na Tretia raib*; Todorov and Poppetrov, *VII sastav na Narodnia sud*).

48 Danova and Avramov, *Deportiraneto na evreite ot Vardarska Makedonia, Belomorska Trakia i Pirov mart 1943 g.*

49 Fol et al., *Istoria za 11 klas na obshtoobrazovatelnite uchilishta*, 340.

50 Gyuzelev, *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (zadalmazhitelna podgotovka)*; Andreev et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (zadalmazhitelna i profilirana podgotovka)*.

The context is described as a complex situation of Nazi pressure and the thesis of the limited sovereignty of the Bulgarian authorities in the “new lands” is launched: Bulgarian troops “were allowed” to enter, Bulgaria “acquired the right” to establish its administration;⁵¹ the territories “were ceded to Bulgaria for administration till the end of the war.”⁵² The decision on deportation was taken under “strong German pressure”; the government was “forced” to sign a secret agreement for deportation⁵³; Bulgaria “could not stop the deportation,”⁵⁴ “could not prevail on the occupied territories and the Germans deported over 11,000 Jews.”⁵⁵ The main actors are the King who “repeatedly and publicly stressed the contribution of the Jewish community”⁵⁶ and “interfered” to prevent the deportation of Bulgarian Jews,⁵⁷ thus playing a central and positive role; the vice-chair of the Parliament Dimitar Peshev and the civil society, leading intellectuals and the Orthodox Church, whose actions “became a trump in the hands of the monarch to impose on the government a cancellation of the decision on the deportation of Bulgarian Jews.”⁵⁸ The role of the propaganda is stressed, which insisted on the “liberation” of Vardar Macedonia and Northern Thrace, and on the “unification” of Bulgaria. Paradoxically, however, the terminology of the textbooks does not seem to be entirely free of similar rhetoric: they speak of “new lands,” which were “returned” to Bulgaria (the term “occupation” is never used), and they accuse the propaganda of omitting the fact that the unification was “partial and temporary,” “incomplete in territorial and ethnic terms.”

Unlike the hesitant dealing with the communist past, Bulgarian political elites have been quite active in coining the official “rescue” version and launching it. Instead of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day instituted by the UN General Assembly (January 27), Bulgaria commemorates March 10 as the day of the rescue of Bulgar-

51 Andreev et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (zadalzhitelna i profilirana podgotovka)*, 316.

52 Nikolov et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (profilirana podgotovka)*, 415.

53 Gyuzelev et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (zadalzhitelna podgotovka)*, 249.

54 Nikolov et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (profilirana podgotovka)*, 415.

55 Andreev et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (zadalzhitelna i profilirana podgotovka)*, 317.

56 Gyuzelev et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (zadalzhitelna podgotovka)*, 249.

57 Nikolov et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (profilirana podgotovka)*, 415.

58 Andreev et al., *Istoria i civilizacia za 11 klas (zadalzhitelna i profilirana podgotovka)*, 317.

ian Jews in 1943. On March 8, 2013, the Parliament unanimously adopted a declaration on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews and in honor of the memory of the victims of Holocaust.⁵⁹ It called for an evaluation of the events of Bulgarian history “in their completeness and multi-facetedness,” seen as the only way to stop “speculations and the false presentation of Bulgarian history.” The rescue of the Bulgarian Jews was defined as “showing the humanity and tolerance of the Bulgarian people as well as its will for justice.” Praising the courage of the forty-three MPs led by Dimitar Peshev and of the intellectuals and citizens who protested against the deportation of Bulgarian Jews, the Declaration also addressed that of the Jews from Northern Greece and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, “then under German jurisdiction.” The condemnation of this “criminal act undertaken by the Hitlerite headquarters” was followed by a regret that “it was beyond the capacities of the local Bulgarian administration to stop it” and an appeal not to use the tragic fate of the dead for political speculations today.

The text of the declaration was not debated in the plenary hall. It was agreed upon in advance by the leaders of all parliamentary groups and can thus be taken to articulate the current political consensus on the question of the Bulgarian Holocaust. It seems to be meant primarily for international audiences and to be concerned above all with the defense of national dignity.

CONCLUSION: MEMORY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

As Roumen Avramov pointed out, the narrative of the survival of the Bulgarian Jews has by now acquired the calm completeness of a moralizing story with a happy end, schematic protagonists, and distribution of roles, and has coined a convenient political correctness stressing the ontological tolerance of “the people” and playing down the anti-Semitic attitudes.⁶⁰ Thus the confronting of the Holocaust has been

59 Full text available at the official website of the Parliament (“Stenogrami ot plenarni zasedaniya – Chetiristotin petdeset i vtoro zasedanie,” Narodno Sabranie Na Republika Balgariya, March 8, 2013, <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenaryst/ns/7/ID/3283>).

60 Avramov, “*Spasenie*” i *padenie*, 26.

happening in Bulgaria at two gears: faster and more adequately in research, slowly and controversially in the politics of memory. Indeed, the current memory narrative has emerged mostly in response to the spreading of the European mnemonic canon to the East. However, its characteristics have been determined to a great extent by the lack of a consensual framework about communism. This deficit has brought about a peculiar configuration of the cultural production of knowledge about the recent past: the interpretations currently dominating publicity have developed almost independently of the accumulation of knowledge. It turns out that factual authenticity alone is not sufficient to add up to a picture of the past; no less important is how the access to this knowledge is structured and how it is socially and culturally situated. The lack of a shared moral attitude toward the former regime in Bulgarian society has led to a situation where awareness of the recent past, and the vision of what it was and how it led to the present, has been cultivated within opposing, politically tribalized mnemonic communities. Their boundaries are more rigid than those implied by alternative explanations advanced in the course of a constructive debate. Rather, they are drawn by the instrumentalization of the past for different uses and interests. The minimal—perhaps the only—common ground in this situation is the national(ist) cause articulated in simple dichotomies such as “us—them,” “patriots—traitors,” and so on. As Avramov has concluded, discussing the question of guilt: “When at the top of the value pyramid is the fulfilment of ‘the national ideal,’ all other tasks and steps acquire secondary importance, and whatever the decisions, they receive primordial justification ...”⁶¹ In a configuration like this, in the battle between “communists” and “fascists,” there can hardly be any space left for complexities, analyses, juxtaposition of viewpoints, dialogue, and politics of regret.

Thus, the result of the Europeanization of post-communist memory seems to be much more complex and controversial than expected. It has not led—and obviously will not lead—to the construction of a monolithic European memory; it has not even led to the unequivocal acceptance of the core European *lieu de mémoire* in Bulgaria. Europe-

61 Avramov, “Cheteiki arhivite na deortatsiata,” 34.

anization has not only meant the atmosphere in which basically national policies have grown, neither the normative conditionality in the course of EU accession (i.e., the orientation to European norms and standards), but also their use and even manipulation in the interests of particular groups, countries, or causes. Consequently, the Europeanization of memory has enabled processes leading in different directions and adding up to a complex picture. First, it highlighted the potential of the “salvation” narrative for the international image-making efforts of Bulgarian elites and has been used accordingly. Second, it brought into view the dark side of it—the deportation, much to the annoyance of the engineers of national pride. As a result, a certain non-simultaneity of remembrance has emerged. Bulgaria has not (yet?) succeeded to inscribe itself into European “politics of regret” and to find its catharsis. Third, however, considerable research has been going on in terms of fact finding, contextualizing already known facts and advancing more critical interpretations. This is the most important positive result of what can be seen as Europeanization of memory. Paraphrasing Nietzsche, a considerable progress has been achieved toward revealing the truth. The challenge now is to accept it and learn to live with it.

Equalizing Jesus's, Jewish, and Croat Suffering—Post-Socialist Politics of History in Croatia

Ljiljana Radonić

World War II was the founding myth both for socialist Yugoslavia, based on the narrative of the supra-national partisan struggle, and for post-socialist Croatia, due to President Franjo Tuđman's idea that both partisans and Ustasha had fought for the Croatian cause, albeit in different ways. How did this strong role of politics of history impact professional historiography and vice versa, what influence did the latter have? Does it make sense at all to speak of a Croatian historiography in socialist Yugoslavia—were there fields free of influence from socialist hegemonic narrative? This chapter argues that this is true for the conservative historiography before the 1960s, but also for the two currents that developed in this period: There was a growing tension between distinguished medieval studies and historians like Mirjana Gross, who established contacts with international experts, oriented themselves on new Western methodology, and promoted approaches of the *Annales* School on the one hand, and nationalist historians whose engagement seemed limited to verbal exchange about contemporary history with their Serbian counterparts on the other hand. This last current, represented by the later Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, became dominant after Croatia's independence in 1991.

Was history so much politicized when a socialist historian who turned nationalist became Croatia's president in 1990, that professional historiography had no chance of competing with the popular narratives of the past? I argue that no "pluralization" of history and memory took place after Croatia became independent and Bleiburg turned into the most important *lieu de mémoire*—an Austrian border town in the British occupation zone, which the fleeing Ustasha and the army of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) had tried to reach in May 1945 when at least 50,000 of them were killed by the partisans. These crimes had been a taboo in socialist Yugoslavia, but now they substituted the memory of the Ustasha concentration camp Jasenovac and became a nationalist myth. Bleiburg was called the site of the "Croatian holocaust" and the marches of the prisoners back into Yugoslavia were called the "way of the cross," thus comparing "Croat" suffering with that of Jesus. But how did the consolidation of the up-to-then deficient democracy affect the politics of history after Tuđman's death and the defeat of his party in 2000? Did democratization go hand in hand with a professionalization and a pluralist understanding of history and memory? What role did the process of European integration play in this development? Was Croat suffering again in the focus once the former Tuđman's party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), won the elections again in 2003?

CROATIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY IN TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA

After the socialist takeover of Yugoslavia, authorities expected historians to deal with the history of the communist movement, the working class, the "War of National Liberation," and the "Socialist Revolution." The leading institutions in this process were the Institutes for the History of the Workers Movement; three of them were founded in Croatia. On the one hand, this was a step toward modernizing the writing of history, since more attention was paid to economic and social history for the first time. But on the other hand, the aim of the new historiography was "to totally ideologize modern history," as the Zagreb-based historian Neven Budak puts it, adding that this only affected the last century: "In their narrow-mindedness, communist ideologists fortunately ignored previous historical periods, so that a large-

er part of history was spared the treatment applied to the period after the mid-nineteenth century.”¹ Medieval and early modern history, and—to some extent—also the history of the nineteenth century, did not reflect socialist influence concerning the topics chosen for research, especially not the methodology. For a long time, positivism remained the dominant tool for explaining the past. This started to change only gradually in the late 1950s and 1960s, when contacts with scholars from other countries intensified² and several books from the *Annales* School were translated, the first one being “Feudal Society” by Marc Bloch in 1958.³ Only in the 1970s did Mirjana Gross spread the knowledge about *Annalist* methodology and influenced the younger generations of historians, especially with her book *Historijska znanost* (Historical Studies),⁴ in which she “advocated an approach called “genetic-structural history,” conceptualized as a combination of non-dogmatic Marxism and a Braudelian understanding of time and structure.”⁵ When it comes to research on the periods up to the nineteenth century, the socialist understanding of history remains predominantly limited to the institutional framing defined, for example, by scepticism concerning international exchange. The field in which socialist historiography was written was first and foremost contemporary history. But even the research on this period was never as dogmatic as in other socialist countries. The idea that socialist historiography had to fight against bourgeois ways of depicting the past never played as big a role as in Stalinist historiography.⁶

World War II in particular became *the* founding myth of postwar Yugoslavia, and its depiction shows the development from a common socialist into several conflicting nationalist narratives from the 1960s onward. As in other socialist states, the rule of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia was legitimized by World War II partisan struggle

1 Budak, “Post-Socialist Historiography in Croatia since 1990,” 130.

2 Mirjana Gross wrote that the first international history congress she attended in 1955 was crucial for her further orientation as a historian, since she gained first information about the group around the *Annales* journal (Gross: *Suvremena historiografija*, 10).

3 See also Huizinga, *Jesen srednjeg vijeka*.

4 Gross, *Historijska znanost*.

5 Budak, “Post-Socialist Historiography in Croatia since 1990,” 141.

6 See Höpken, “Von der Mythologisierung zur Stigmatisierung,” 170.

against the Nazis. But unlike Poland, Hungary, or Romania, Yugoslavia's partisans had actually liberated its territory with almost no foreign support. On the other hand, the partisans had also faced the task of first having to legitimize the very existence of a Yugoslav state, following a civil war that pitted the Croatian fascist Ustasha, Serbian royalist Chetniks, and Tito's Partisans against each other. A special challenge was the question of how to deal with the mass murder committed by the Ustasha—a rare example of a collaborationist regime that had operated death camps on its own beside the Third Reich. In contrast to the situation in Romania, for example, where the collaborationist regime had established camps in Transnistria,⁷ these camps—Jasenovac was the biggest—had existed within the borders of Croatia.

The Partisans had also committed mass murder at the end of the war, in a series of events known in today's Croatia as the "Bleiburg tragedy." In May 1945, soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, Croatian Ustasha, regular army members (Domobranci) and civilians, Serbian Chetniks, Slovenian Domobranci, and others fled from Yugoslav partisans, hoping to surrender to the British Army near the Austrian town of Bleiburg. The British refused the surrender and extradited most of these people to the partisans. Although the total number of the victims remains uncertain, one can say that during the battles with the partisans and on the forced march back into the country, tens of thousands of Croat Ustasha, Domobranci, as well as civilians, were killed after May 15, most of them in Kočevski rog and Tezno in Slovenia, but many on the so-called way of the cross or death marches, as the hundreds of kilometres long marches are called in contemporary Croatia. The reputable demographer Vladimir Žerjavić presumes that during battles with the partisans before the capitulation, as well as on the way back into the country on the marches, 45,000–55,000 Ustasha and Domobranci were killed.⁸ Any mention of these events became taboo

7 Domanvka, Bogdanovka, and Akhmetchetka were the largest mass-murder camps in Transnistria established in October 1941 by the Romanian occupation authorities, Romanian soldiers and police, Ukrainian police, and local civilians; in Domanvka, the *Sonderkommando* was also responsible for mass murder. See Rozett and Spector, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*.

8 Žerjavić, *Population losses in Yugoslavia 1941–1945*, 94. See also Dietrich, "Der Bleiburger Opfermythos"; Geiger, "Ljudski gubici Hrvatske u Drugome svjetskom ratu."

after 1945 and they were only vaguely addressed as fights against collaborationist guerrilla.

Although the Ustasha had operated death camps without Nazi assistance in World War II, no specific nation (e.g., “the Croats”) was considered guilty of, or responsible for, collaboration or mass murder in official narratives during the first decades after 1945. These crimes were projected onto the marginalized non-Communist members “of all Yugoslav nations,” indicating “equal” guilt of Ustasha, Chetnik, and Slovenian Domobranci, as well as Bosnian Muslim collaborators. Thus, the anti-fascist struggle and founding myth of “brotherhood and unity” (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*) played a key role in the resurrection of the Yugoslav state itself. The memory of the common struggle against fascism grew into the state’s most significant founding myth, and its defamation became a punishable offense.⁹ The Communist Party forbade debates about the civil war, so that only one particular fragment of the past was remembered—the heroic anti-fascist struggle. Each Yugoslav republic celebrated the date when partisan resistance had begun in it. Each of these memorial days was determined by official historiography, and there was clear hierarchy among them: the Communist Party had started the resistance fight on July 4, 1941; Serbia followed three days later, Montenegro on July 13, Slovenia on July 22. Because of the Ustasha regime, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were assigned only July 27—President Franjo Tuđman changed this date to June 22 as one of his first acts in office in 1990.¹⁰ The cult around the military and political leader of the partisans, Tito, was the overarching narrative that bonded together all the different memories. After his death in 1980, the regime issued the parole: “And after Tito—Tito,” his pictures and busts boomed.¹¹

Deserving partisans were privileged in society and politics, while relatives of “traitors to the people” had a very difficult standing and their memories were an absolute taboo. The Holocaust and the mass

9 Höpken, “Der Zweite Weltkrieg in den jugoslawischen und post-jugoslawischen Schulbüchern”; Najbar-Agičić, “Jugoslavenska povijest u hrvatskim udžbenicima.”

10 Repe, “Öffentliche Gedenktage bei den Slowenen von 1848 bis 1991,” 333; Hudelist, *Tuđman: Biografija*, 146.

11 Petzer, “‘Tito’—Symbol und Kult,” 121.

murder of Serbs and Roma by the Ustasha were treated as minor matters, although locally based survivor groups, which found themselves united in their common need to mourn the dead and to obtain official acknowledgment of their suffering, created a space not only for individual but also for group remembrance.¹² Although most monuments were dedicated to the “heroic people’s liberation struggle” and the “victims of fascism” in general, some memorials on the local level commemorated specific incidents motivated by ethnic hatred, such as the memorial building created in memory of the Serbs murdered by the Ustasha in the Orthodox Church of Glina in 1941.¹³

The history of the Jasenovac camp memorial demonstrates the tension between heroic and victim memory. The Ustasha had blasted away the concentration camp before the end of the war, and what traces remained were removed for unknown reasons after May 1945. There was no memorial until the central committee of the Association of Fighters of the People’s Liberation War (SUBNOR) asked architects for their proposals in the 1960s, thanks to ongoing demands from survivors and victim families. In 1966 Bogdan Bogdanović’s giant flower monument was inaugurated, and a memorial museum opened two years later. The abstract flower symbol that opens toward the sky stood for hope and the future. It does not accuse anyone nor does it categorize the victims ethnically. Another suggestion at the time was to install a huge black skull, but this did not fit the “brotherhood and unity” narrative. In Tito’s Yugoslavia, Jasenovac on the one hand remained an ambivalent *lieu de mémoire* since it was taboo to assert that only Croats had committed crimes there, while Serbs, Jews, and Roma were the largest victim groups.¹⁴ On the other hand, it became a central site of memory for victims “of all Yugoslav nations,” a site with tourist infrastructure, souvenirs (postcards, pins, or key ring pendants), and other forms of kitsch,¹⁵ visited by 50,000 people in 1985 on the fortieth anniversary of the inmates’ attempted breakout in 1945.

¹² Karge, “Mediated Remembrance,” 57.

¹³ Karge, “Offizielle Narration trifft lokale Praktiken,” 100.

¹⁴ Höpken, “Jasenovac – Bleiburg – Kočevski rog,” 410.

¹⁵ Sundhaussen, “Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten,” 400; Mataušić, *Jasenovac 1941.–1945.*, 154.

In the postwar decades, the Communist Party had successfully established the narrative of “supranational” partisans from all Yugoslav nations. During the 1960s, however, controversies between Serbian and Croatian historians about each nation’s “share” in the war, the victory, and in collaboration with the Germans and Italians, brought an end to the “brotherhood and unity” narrative.¹⁶ Interestingly enough, on the Croatian side, it was the later president Franjo Tuđman himself who contributed to this development, first as a World War II historian in Belgrade and subsequently as director of the Institute for the History of the Workers’ Movement in Zagreb. In his first book published in 1957, he stated that it had been the Serbian Chetniks who had collaborated with the occupiers against the People’s Liberation Struggle in the most obvious way¹⁷—without even mentioning the Ustasha regime, for which this characterization would have been more appropriate. Serbian historians on the other hand depicted the People’s Liberation Struggle as a fight against Nazis, Ustasha, and Domobrani (the Croatian Army), while being silent about the Serbian Chetnik fight against the partisans.¹⁸

Tuđman’s next step was to oppose the official narrative of a whole-Yugoslav partisan struggle by stressing the role of the Croatian, especially the north Croatian partisans, whom he had joined, while diminishing the role of the eastern regions where Serbian partisans had been active.¹⁹ In his next book, published in 1960, he defended the Domobrani, who had been considered collaborators before, by claiming that they were mobilized into the Croatian Army by force, did not want to fight against the partisans, defected, and gave them their weapons.²⁰ Nonetheless, he was promoted and became general-major of the Yugoslav Army before he left Belgrade in the summer of 1961 to become director of the newly inaugurated Institute for the History of the People’s Movement in Zagreb. In 1963 Velimir Terzić from the Institute for

16 Hudelist, *Tuđman: Biografija*, 259; Bašić, “Der jugoslawische Partisanenkampf,” 95.

17 Tuđman, *Rat protiv rata*, 250.

18 Hudelist, *Tuđman: Biografija*, 250; Agičić and Najbar-Agičić, “Hrvatska historiografija o 1941. —polemika bez dijaloga?,” 147.

19 Hudelist, *Tuđman: Biografija*, 257.

20 Tuđman, *Stvaranje socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 58.

Military History in Belgrade fuelled the conflict between Croatian and Serbian nationalists by claiming that all of the Croatian people had been on the side of the Ustasha.²¹ Tuđman meanwhile continued to claim that the Domobrani had not been fascists but rather a regular Croatian Army, and he started criticizing the official numbers of 700,000 Jasenovac victims as too high. While he was correct at first that the number was too high, he later ended up asserting figures that were far too low, thus playing down Ustasha crimes. As a result, the leader of the Croatian Central Committee deprived the Institute of its financial basis in 1965, fired Tuđman in 1967, and banned him from the Communist Party. After that, he became increasingly nationalist and intensified his contacts with the radical Croatian Diaspora. Those different ways of remembering World War II became an element of political mobilization in the late 1980s.²² The question of the numbers of Jasenovac victims became a core issue in that decade. While the Belgrade-based statistician Bogoljub Kočović and the Croatian demographer Vladimir Žerjavić²³ each estimated about 70,000 to 90,000 victims, Serbian nationalists placed the numbers at over a million, while Tuđman reduced the number to 30,000–40,000 victims.²⁴

Contrary to World War II historiography and politics, history textbooks did not reflect the growing nationalization of the supranational narrative. In the 1960s textbooks from the Yugoslav republics dealt with the “brotherhood and unity” topos almost identically. According to Snježana Koren, they presented the occupying forces and their domestic allies (Ustasha, Chetniks, Volksdeutsche, and other collaborators) as the evil side. Against them fought the majority from all Yugoslav peoples and ethnicities, workers, peasants, and the intelligentsia, who rose in an insurrection led by Tito and the KPJ, so the narrative.²⁵ Later on, the textbooks reflected the process of federalization: the re-

²¹ Terzić, *Jugoslavija u aprilskom ratu*.

²² Höpken, “Vergangenheitspolitik im sozialistischen Vielvölkerstaat: Jugoslawien 1944 bis 1991,” 224.

²³ Kočović, *Žrtve Drugog svjetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*; Žerjavić, *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u Drugom svjetskom ratu*.

²⁴ Tuđman, *Bespuća povijesne zbiljnosti*, 316.

²⁵ See Koren, “Slike nacionalne povijesti u hrvatskim udžbenicima uoči i nakon raspada Jugoslavije,” 255.

publics gained more competences in 1971, but this only had the consequence that all-Yugoslav values were taught in the context of the respective ethnic group: "History textbooks usually followed the pattern of presenting 'a little bit of all-Yugoslav history, a little bit of your history, a little bit more of my history.'"²⁶ The issue of ethnic conflicts or the civil war was not broached and no concepts for interethnic learning were developed.

CROATIAN POLITICS OF HISTORY FROM 1990–1999

Between 1991 and 1999, Croatia was a "deficient democracy,"²⁷ given that President Tuđman's overwhelming authority, the regime's refusal to accept electoral results (as with its defeat in the Zagreb city council election of 1995), and its repression of oppositional groups and the free media, violated democratic rules.²⁸ Ethnic-nationalist enthusiasm following the assertion of independent statehood went hand-in-hand with the marginalization and criminalization of alternate views—especially when it came to the struggle over the truth about World War II. Once all the daily newspapers, except for *Novi List* in Rijeka, had been taken over by entrepreneurs close to the ruling HDZ,²⁹ the remaining free newspaper and weekly magazines were subjected to repression and court trials. This was the case, for example, for the weekly *Feral Tribune* in 1996 after it criticized President Tuđman's plan to rededicate the Jasenovac concentration camp memorial to "all Croatian victims" rather than to those of the Ustasha.³⁰ This control of the media offers a crucial context for understanding the ways in which Tuđman and his party asserted a new official politics of history once they won the elections in spring 1990.

After Croatia gained independence in 1991, the most important scholarly institutions for the interpretation of history and society, the

26 Höpken, "History Education and Yugoslav (Dis-)Integration," 106.

27 Merkel, "'Eingebettete' und defekte Demokratien: Theorie und Empirie," 64.

28 Ramet and Matić, *Demokratska tranzicija u Hrvatskoj*; Jergović, *Odmjeravanje snaga*; Kasapović and Šiber, "Electoral Policy and the Determinants of Electoral Behavior in Croatia (1990–2000)"; Kasapović, *Hrvatska politika 1990–2000*.

29 Ivančić, *Lomača za protuhrvatski blud*, 118.

30 Pusić, *Demokracije i diktature*, 194.

Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb, tried to keep a distance from the nationalist reinvention of history put forward by the ruling HDZ and were therefore depicted as oppositional or even communist. So a new Faculty for Croatian Studies was founded in 1993, including a new, rival Department of History parallel to the department of the same name at the Faculty of Philosophy: "This faculty was favoured financially, in the same way as the Croatian Institute for History,"³¹ how the successor institution of Tuđman's Institute for the History of the Workers Movement was called.

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Croatia found itself in a far different position from other post-communist countries, first because its president—who had worked as a historian in the communist era—made politics of the past an important part of his agenda. Franjo Tuđman's anti-Semitic book *Wastelands of Historical Reality* (1989)³² constituted the first step in establishing the frame of the historical narrative for the new state. In this work, he equated the crimes committed by both the Ustasha and the Partisans by minimizing the number of people killed in the Ustasha concentration camp Jasenovac.³³ Since Tuđman argued that Croats from both sides of World War II needed to be reconciled (*pomirba*, which will be analyzed in greater detail below), he anchored anti-fascism formally in the new constitution of independent Croatia in 1990: "The millenarian identity of the Croatian

31 Budak, "Post-Socialist Historiography in Croatia since 1990," 148–49.

32 Ibid. See also: Milentijević, "Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Yugoslavia."

33 Serbs, Roma, Jews, and Croatian fighters against the Ustaša-regime were killed in and around the five camps that constituted the Jasenovac concentration camp. 80,914 victims have been identified by name until today ("Poimenični popis žrtava KČL Jasenovac 1941–1945," JUSP Jasenovac, <http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=6284>). For Tuđman, who stated in 1990 that he was lucky because his wife was neither Jewish nor Serbian, anti-Semitism is a historical constant (Tuđman, *Bespuća povijesne zbiljnosti*, 368). He argues that Jewish "anationality" (ibid., 195) is the reason for their tragic fate and equates Jews with their persecutors, saying that Jews were responsible for the administration of the Jasenovac camp and that Jewish prisoners took part in the executions (ibid., 316–20). Furthermore, he draws a line from Nazi-fascism to "Judeo-fascism," which is an anti-Semitic thesis well known in the West, according to which the Jews are the new Nazis. Due to protests first of all from the United States, he later on removed the anti-Semitic parts from the English version but not from the Croatian one, which was reprinted in numerous editions (MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts*, 100).

nation and the continuity of its statehood [...] manifested in [...] establishing the foundations of state sovereignty during the course of World War II, by the decisions of the Antifascist Council of National Liberation of Croatia (1943), as opposed to the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia (1941).”³⁴

Yet all other elements of politics of the past indicated that the idea of a Croatian state was only conceivable in combination with historical revisionism concerning the character of that NDH from the period 1941–45.³⁵ The Ustasha-regime, whose anti-Semitism was a precise replica of Nazi anti-Semitism and whose brutal mass murder of Serbs even led to protests by the Germans, was depicted as one of the most important phases in Croatia’s struggle for national identity. Contrary to the lip service Tuđman’s regime paid to anti-fascism, most street names, which had formerly commemorated the victories of the Partisan struggle and the “victims of fascism,” were now renamed. The best-known and most disputed example was the renaming of the “Square of the Victims of fascism,” the former location of the Ustasha police and Gestapo headquarters in Zagreb, into the “Square of the Croatian Heroes” in 1990. After that renaming, every year on May 8, a rally took place at the square demanding that the square be renamed again. Over the years this annual rally grew larger and the left and liberal opposition parties started to participate, including politicians such as Stipe Mesić, Croatia’s president from 2000–10, and Vesna Pusić, chief negotiator of Croatia’s European Union (EU)-accession and foreign minister of the center-left government from 2011 onward.³⁶ The square got back its old name only after the turnabout elections in 2000, which ended the rule of the HDZ a few months after Tuđman’s death in 1999. In the 1990s seventeen streets in Croatia were named after poet Mile Budak, the Ustasha minister of education, who had been responsible for NDH’s racial laws. Cafés and kindergartens (but no streets) were renamed for the leader of the Ustasha regime, Ante Pavelić.

34 “Ustav Republike Hrvatske,” Sabor Republike Hrvatske, http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1990_12_56_1092.html.

35 Brkljačić and Sundhausen, “Symbolwandel und symbolischer Wandel,” 935.

36 *Vjesnik*, May 11, 1999.

According to the “association of anti-fascist fighters” (SAB), from the time Croatia became independent in 1991 until 2000, 2,964 memorials commemorating the anti-fascist struggle and victims of World War II were removed, destroyed, or vandalized without anyone being punished for it.³⁷ Often it was community or regional authorities³⁸ that ordered these measures and military units that enforced them. In Gradec, for example, military trucks destroyed a huge memorial, made by the famous sculptor Antun Augustinčić, in honor of the 1942 partisan capture of an Italian ship.³⁹ In a few cases, the red star was simply removed or painted over.⁴⁰ Sometimes it was replaced with a cross and the Croatian national emblem.⁴¹ In other cases, the sentence “Fallen for the People’s Liberation Struggle” (“Narodnooslobodilačka borba”—NOB) was reformulated as “Fallen for Croatia.”⁴² Yet another strategy was to add the names of Bleiburg victims or of those who fell in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s to the names of the “victims of fascism.”⁴³ All transformation and destruction strategies aimed at removing as many references to Yugoslavia as possible and at constructing a teleological idea of Croatian statehood, even if this meant erecting memorials to Ustasha criminals. In 1993, a memorial plaque commemorating the “Ustasha fallen for the NDH” was placed on the building housing the Croatian Army in Sinj.⁴⁴ In 1999, a memorial to the Ustasha-criminal Jure Francetić, the founder of the “Black Legion,” was erected in Slunj.⁴⁵

History schoolbooks of the 1990s also reflected the revisionist approach. In Yugoslavia schoolbooks for the eighth grade had discussed World War II in almost half of the text, but this history of World War

37 See Hrženjak, *Rušenje antifašističkih spomenika u Hrvatskoj 1990–2000*, xii.

38 Ivančić, *Točka na U. Slučaj Šakić*, 67.

39 Hrženjak, *Rušenje antifašističkih spomenika u Hrvatskoj 1990–2000*, 216; Ivančić, *Točka na U. Slučaj Šakić*, 67.

40 Cipek, “Sjećanje na 1945: čuvanje i brisanje,” 161.

41 Hrženjak, *Rušenje antifašističkih spomenika u Hrvatskoj 1990–2000*, xiii.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.; Robioneck, Müller and Vulesica, *Erinnerungskultur in Dalmatien*.

44 Paštar, T. “VAD traži da HSP skine ploču palim ustašama,” *Slobodna Dalmacija*, September 16, 2004; *Novi list*, September 25, 2004.

45 Čulić, *Tuđman: anatomija neprosvijećenog apsolutizma*, 106.

II had mostly encompassed the Partisan struggle.⁴⁶ After Croatian independence, World War II was covered in only one fifth of the new schoolbooks for the eighth grade. Furthermore, a “de-Yugoslavization” took place: The content concerning the partisan struggle was cut by half,⁴⁷ and the focus changed from Yugoslav military history to “Croatian” political moments like the founding of the National Anti-Fascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH) and the decision to create a Croatian state within Yugoslavia.⁴⁸ The NDH was discussed primarily as a crucial part of Croatian history in a Croat-teological manner.⁴⁹

Until 1998 there was only one history textbook for all eighth grade students (in several editions), which described the “achievement” of a Croatian “independent” state in 1941, along with the cultural progress and the geographical structure of the state, without mentioning its atrocities. While positive characteristics were ascribed to the NDH, any atrocities were attributed specifically to the Ustasha regime described on half a page⁵⁰—a division comparable to a distinction between the Third Reich and the Nazis. Jasenovac was mentioned only in two lines, and the term Holocaust was not mentioned at all, while the crimes of the Chetniks were described extensively, including pictures that were supposed to cause abhorrence. The crimes against non-Croats were mentioned only in one place and justified at the same time: “Following the Nazi example, the Ustasha terrorised Jews and Roma, but also Serbs, first of all because of their earlier hegemonic politics and because of the appearance of Chetniks and their atrocities in Croatia.”⁵¹ In comparison to this short mention, the persecution of Croats by the Ustasha regime is discussed at length and fits the attempt to depict Ustasha camps largely as prisons for political opponents of the regime. In the chapter about war crimes during World War II, there is a picture of an English concentration camp from the

46 See, for example, Perazić, *Udžbenik za 8. razred osnovne škole*.

47 Koren, “Slike nacionalne povijesti u hrvatskim udžbenicima uoči i nakon raspada Jugoslavije,” 259.

48 Koren, “Nastava povijesti između historije i pamćenja,” 245.

49 Höpken, “History Education and Yugoslav (Dis-)Integration,” 112.

50 Perić, *Povijest 8: udžbenik za 8. razred osnovne škole*, 85.

51 Ibid., 89. For recent developments in Croatia, see Radonić, “‘Unsere’ Helden, Opfer, Täter.”

Boer War (which is not the topic of the chapter), but no picture of a Nazi death camp. On the other hand, Bleiburg is discussed extensively, and the editions from 1992–95 mention “50,000–300,000 victims,”⁵² while in later editions from 1998 and 1999, Ivo Perić writes about “several tens of thousands Croats.”⁵³

In 1995 new curricula for elementary and high schools were introduced, which adopted the textbooks’ narrow nationalist perspective.⁵⁴ The high school lesson plan stipulated that one lesson on the interwar period should deal with “Croatia under the Weight of Centralism and Great Serbian Hegemony,” including “the cruelty of the regime” and “economic neglect and exploitation.”⁵⁵ The partisan movement was not addressed as a Yugoslav one, but as “Resistance of Anti-fascist Croatia” and “part of worldwide anti-fascism.” The plan erased the fact that the Ustasha committed mass murder; teachers were instructed to refer to the “*dictatorship* of the Ustasha regime”—a very neutral term—on the one hand, but to “Chetnik organizations and their *terror*” as well as to “Partisan *crimes*” on the other. Finally, Croatia was depicted as “chained up in the Second Yugoslavia.”⁵⁶ Thus, both the lesson plans and the schoolbooks in Croatia presented as one-sided a picture as had those in the former Yugoslavia, although the perspective they presented was totally different.

The two most prominent sites of memory, Jasenovac and Bleiburg, were equated by calling Bleiburg the site of the “Croatian holocaust,”⁵⁷ as the president of the parliament did in 1995.⁵⁸ Annual Bleiburg commemorations under the patronage of the Croatian parliament always attracted more visitors and were broadcast live on television—despite the Ustasha insignia present throughout the site⁵⁹—while the Jasenovac commemorations were only broadcast regularly since

52 Perić, *Povijest 8: udžbenik za 8. razred osnovne škole*, 112.

53 Ibid., 85. See also Grahek, “Bleiburg i Križni put u hrvatskim udžbenicima povijesti,” 643.

54 *Nastavni plan i program za osnovne škole u Republici Hrvatskoj*; Koren, “Promjene u nastavnom planu i programu za osnovne škole u Republici Hrvatskoj tijekom posljednjeg desetljeća.”

55 *Nastavni plan i program za gimnazije u Republici Hrvatskoj*, 172.

56 Ibid., 173.

57 Prcela and Živić., *Hrvatski holokaust*.

58 *Vjesnik*, May 16, 1995.

59 *Novi list*, March 12, 2003.

Tuđman's death. The Catholic Church regularly dispatched priests to the much better frequented commemorations in Bleiburg, while only once during the 1990s did a local Catholic priest attend a commemoration in Jasenovac.⁶⁰ The only Croatian politicians Tuđman sent to attend the commemorations in Jasenovac had—like himself—been Partisans in their youth, although this was unnoticeable from their speeches at the site, and since they instrumentalized the commemorations in order to underscore the narrative of Croatian victimhood. Public discourse was clearly dominated by the historical narrative of the HDZ, which is why we can only find five quotations from critics of the Bleiburg myth of Jesus-like suffering during the whole Tuđman era in the state-owned newspaper *Vjesnik*.⁶¹

In order to examine how this politics of history was intertwined with historiography in independent Croatia, we can follow the aforementioned Zagreb-based historian Neven Budak, who came to the conclusion that there was an “unhealthy competition” between the Department of History and the Croatian Institute for History. There was “the attempt of some historians to revise the established interpretation of modern Croatian history” and the Institute was considered “a center of historical revisionism.”⁶² On the other hand, historians from the Department were accused of having a communist background and lacking national feelings. Furthermore, Mirjana Gross, a survivor of Ravensbrück, and Ivo Goldstein, both professors at the Department of History, were targeted by “polemics” with “anti-Semitic connotations,”⁶³ as Budak puts it. He points out that Ivo Goldstein was the first one to criticize historical revisionism in 2001, first by Franjo Tuđman. But Budak is very keen to stress that two out of the three professional historians Goldstein criticizes “came to Croatia after many years in exile” and that especially Jure Krišto “can be considered a representative of the ideology of those Croatian emigrants who judged the situation in the country from a distant and extremely anti-communist perspective,

60 *Novi list*, April 29, 2002.

61 See Radonić, *Krieg um die Erinnerung*, 240.

62 Budak, “Post-Socialist Historiography in Croatia Since 1990,” 155.

63 *Ibid.*, 158.

... a symbol of unprofessional and nationalistic historiography.”⁶⁴ Although the works of historians like Krišto corresponded with the dominant discourse on history they are here depicted as “unprofessional,” not proper historians.

Budak bans this question into a chapter on usually personal or political debates and depicts historiography as something different from those debates. In order to confirm his argument that Tuđman’s death was “a more important breaking point for Croatian historiography than the year 1990,”⁶⁵ he counted how many articles published between 1990 and 1999 in the four most important Croatian journals for historiography were devoted to which period. He came to the conclusion that “Croatian historians prefer the nineteenth century to all other research fields” and took this as a proof for his claim that “this interest is not the result of any post-socialist changes, but rather represents a constant based on the great importance of the period of the “birth of nations” for Croatian historical writing and even more so, for Croatian political and intellectual life.”⁶⁶ But obviously the focus on the “birth of the Croat nation” has something to do with the newly gained independence of the state. And we also need to ask which narrative prevailed in the texts instead of only aiming at the quantity of historiography publications. Budak writes of the danger of “political abuse of history”⁶⁷ as an everyday phenomenon, but at the same time he does not consider it part of Croatian history and historiography during the 1990s. This is striking, since he himself mentions a shift of topics:

Almost no attention is paid to the history of the Communist Party or the Labor Movement. Historians are now writing about economic history and the history of politicians who opposed the Yugoslav regime from a nationalist standpoint (primarily from the Croatian Peasant Party). The history of World War II has remained a topic of research, but also displays a shift of interest from the War of National Libera-

64 Ibid., 157.

65 Ibid., 150.

66 Ibid., 153.

67 Ibid., 163.

tion to the history of the bourgeois parties and atrocities committed against Croats... It became tempting to reveal the brutalities of the new [communist] regime because during socialism this was—for obvious reasons—a forbidden topic. *Repression* against captured members of the armed forces of the Independent State of Croatia and civilians in 1945, and then against communists and others after the conflict with Stalin in 1948, were described in several articles.⁶⁸

We can sum up in an interim résumé that the division between “professional” and “unprofessional” historians might obstruct the analysis of dominant and marginalized currents in Croatian historiography and politics of history in the 1990s.

POLITICS OF HISTORY AND SCHOOL BOOKS AFTER THE TUĐMAN ERA

After Tuđman’s death at the end of 1999, a coalition led by the Social Democrats won the elections. During the process of democratization, especially the cutting back of the competences of the president and the introduction of efficient checks and balances, the manner in which the past was dealt with in Croatia also changed. In December 2000 the Square of the Victims of fascism received its old name back, and Tuđman’s reburial-plans for a “national memorial” in Jasenovac were finally shelved. In contrast to the 1990s, when only representatives of different national, religious, and political organizations spoke at the commemorations in Jasenovac, in 2002 Iвица Račan was the first serving prime minister to speak there.⁶⁹ However, he balked from clearly stating who had committed the crimes during the Ustasha regime. Instead he spoke generally about the evil that had occurred in Jasenovac, without naming those responsible for the atrocities. Thus, a change of the hegemonic narrative could be observed, but it seemed that the former communist Račan was unwilling or afraid to fully come to terms with the revisionist Tuđman era.

68 Ibid., 153–54.

69 See *Novi list*, April 20, 2002.

The ambivalent perspective of the Račan government was also reflected in some of its members visiting Bleiburg, despite the Ustasha iconography that dominated the commemoration year after year. Račan also went to Bleiburg, but he apologized for the crimes committed by the partisans only apart from the annual commemoration. When President Stipe Mesić, like Račan elected in 2000, was asked whether he planned to visit Bleiburg, however, he responded: “We are not comparing Bleiburg and Jasenovac. None of the victims of Jasenovac are guilty for the people killed in the trenches and in Bleiburg, but a lot of people in Bleiburg were responsible for someone’s death. They are victims, but we cannot say they are innocent. They should not have been killed and tormented, but they should have been put on trial.”⁷⁰ President Mesić furthermore delivered a ground-breaking speech at the commemoration in Jasenovac in 2003, where he rejected Tuđman’s notion that the Ustasha state was an important milestone toward Croatia’s independence, denounced the idea of the “reconciliation of all Croats”⁷¹ as a falsification of history, and condemned the crimes committed in the name of the Croatian state—both during World War II and the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. He also supported the judicial persecution of the war criminals from both war periods. Although some representatives of the parliament again called Bleiburg the site of the “Croatian holocaust,” this became only one of many versions of the past expressed in public. Democratization went hand in hand with the disappearance of the demonization of enemies in general and of “the Serbs” in particular from the dominant discourse.

In 2003, the former Tuđman party, the HDZ, again won the elections. Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, who resigned in 2009, was known as a Europe-oriented statesman who broke with the revisionist ideas of his predecessor. The Sanader administration removed the memorials for the Ustasha-authorities Mile Budak in Sveti Rok and Jure Francetić in Slunj and launched an initiative to rename the aforementioned seventeen streets throughout Croatia that carried the name of Mile Budak. During the Jasenovac commemoration in 2004, Sanader asserted:

⁷⁰ Ibid., April 23, 2005. This and all the following quotations have been translated by the author.

⁷¹ Ibid., May 12, 2003.

"We must not allow the atrocities that occurred in Jasenovac and elsewhere during the Ustasha regime in the NDH ... to be forgotten."⁷² He was the first HDZ politician in Jasenovac to break with the tradition of mentioning the Bleiburg victims along with those killed in Jasenovac and explicitly called the Ustasha regime responsible for Jasenovac⁷³—whereas Tuđman and his followers, but also the Social Democrat Račan, had spoken of some sort of ontological evil that led to the atrocities. However, critical media expressed their scepticism, as HDZ politicians like Andrija Hebrang and Vladimir Šeks, in diametric opposition to their prior appearances, suddenly began delivering anti-fascist speeches.⁷⁴

"The Serbs" played, and continue to play, an enormous role in the narrative of the Croatian "imagined community" and today's political conflicts almost always refer to conflicting "memories." In 2005, before the commemoration in Jasenovac, there was also a commemoration at the memorial site in Donja Gradina (across the Sava River in Republika Srpska, Bosnia, and Herzegovina), which used to be part of the Jasenovac memorial area. On this occasion, the president of the Republika Srpska, Dragan Čavić, stated that there is still no justice for the seven hundred thousand victims of Jasenovac. Afterwards, at the round table about "Tendencies of Historiography and Research on the Jasenovac Concentration Camp," in Banja Luka, the anthropologist Srboľjub Živanović from London made the dubious statement that Croatia still has not overcome its "genocidality," although Croatian politicians, who "reduce" the figure to seventy thousand, claim the opposite.⁷⁵

Sanader, the Croatian prime minister, responded to the "provocation" from the commemoration at the other bank of the Sava River. He condemned "the positions of Greater Serbia in imposing the theory of the alleged genocidal tendencies of the Croatian people" and the exaggeration of the number of victims up to over a million, but also the re-

72 Prime Minister Sanader's speech for the commemoration at the Jasenovac Memorial Museum, 2004.

73 See *Feral Tribune*, March 18, 2004; *Novi list*, March 17, 2004.

74 See *Feral Tribune*, April 29, 2004.

75 See *Novi list*, April 18, 2005.

duction of the number of victims. The premier emphasised contemporary Croatia's "commitment to anti-fascist values,"⁷⁶ but added that the "Homeland War" (1991–95) also was fought against a type of fascism. During a 2005 visit to Yad Vashem, he similarly argued that during the 1990s war the Croats became victims of the same kind of evil as Nazism and fascism, and that no one knew better than the Croats what it meant to be a victim of aggression and crime.⁷⁷ Yad Vashem further inspired Sanader to think about a Museum of the Homeland War, as he told journalists after his visit.⁷⁸

What makes the episode so telling is that these statements were not followed by any protests. This shift away from historical revisionism, which minimized the victims of the Ustasha state in the Tudman era, to a new view that recognizes the Holocaust but presents Croats as victims of fascism, this time of "Serbian fascism," shows the problematic nature of the "universalization of the Holocaust."⁷⁹ The Croatian case illustrates that the Holocaust is increasingly becoming a "container"⁸⁰ for the memory of various victims. But seeing one's own nation as the "new Jews" prevents a critical approach to its own crimes in World War II as well as in the 1990s war.

Furthermore, although HDZ politicians no longer mention the "Croatian suffering" near Bleiburg during the annual commemorations in Jasenovac, Sanader and his colleagues keep condemning "both totalitarianisms," the "red and the black one."⁸¹ This formulation obviously corresponds with European standards perfectly, represented first in the *European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism*, the day of the Hitler-Stalin pact on August 23. Totalitarianism is even in the center of a short Sanader quotation in the *Ten Year Anniversary Book of the International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research*, recently renamed in *International Holocaust*

76 Prime Minister Sanader's speech for the commemoration at the Jasenovac Memorial Museum, 2005.

77 Ibid.

78 See *Vjesnik*, June 29, 2005.

79 Eckel and Moisel, *Universalisierung des Holocaust?*

80 Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*.

81 Black had been the color of the Ustasha uniforms. See *Vjesnik*, March 17, 2004; *Vjesnik*, April 26, 2004; *Vjesnik*, November 28, 2006; *Vjesnik*, April 21, 2008.

Remembrance Alliance: “Democracy’s victory over totalitarianism is the victory of the values embedded in modern Europe and modern Croatia.”⁸²

Today a pluralisation of narratives is obvious also in the education sector, but when it comes to the Ustasha regime between 1941 and 1945 and the crimes committed by the Partisans at the end of the war in 1945 (“The Bleiburg Tragedy”), an analysis of the Croatians history syllabus shows that memory is still “hot.”⁸³ “The Holocaust” and “genocide” are defined as key terms, but also “concentration collective camps” (*koncentracijski sabirni logori*),⁸⁴ a term that, existing neither in Croatian nor in English, expresses uncertainty if not ignorance about the topic. The lesson on the NDH is supposed to provide information on Croatia’s subordination under the Nazi occupying powers and the execution of their will, especially the surrender of the coastal areas to Italy and the country’s economic exploitation. Croatia is thereby depicted as just another victim of the Axis. One part of the lesson is supposed to deal with “cultural achievements” during the war,⁸⁵ while another focuses on the “Ustasha-terror.” This distinction between a “good” NDH and an “evil” Ustasha reproduces the revisionist view common during the 1990s.

This syllabus has been implemented in very different ways in the four eighth grade textbooks authorized by the Croatian ministry of education; schools can choose freely which they use. The two nationalist books reproduce the narrative about the “good” NDH and the “evil” Ustasha, Stjepan Bekavac and Mario Jareb present the rise of the Ustasha as comprehensible, “since it was only possible to solve the accumulated problems of the kingdom of Yugoslavia through the creation an independent Croatian state”—as if the Ustasha were the logical representative of every struggle for independence. They broadly cover “cultural life and media in the NDH,” mentioning that while works of Jewish authors were banned, “a large number of publications were promoted, most of which were not ideologically coloured. One can say

82 Wallin and Newman, *Ten Year Anniversary Book*, 32.

83 Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 66ff.

84 Vican-Višić and Milanović, *Nastavni plan i program za osnovnu školu*, 290.

85 *Ibid.*, 290.

that the publishing sector was very successful despite the ideological control exerted by the Ustasha." A large number of literary works "spoke about Croatian culture for the first time"; radio and film received systematic attention for the first time and were not "ideologically coloured" either. Vesna Đurić, the author of the second nationalist textbook, covers the murder of communist intellectuals at the beginning of the war in a single sentence before jumping to the "cultural achievements" of the NDH, especially the Croatian encyclopedia and the first full-length Croatian film. In the other two books, the fact that the NDH was a mere satellite state is stressed and "cultural achievements" are not mentioned—despite this being a requirement in the syllabus.

Literally on the opposite page in the nationalist schoolbook by Bekavac and Jareb covering "life in the NDH" comes a description of the "Ustasha regime." The authors write about "repressive politics toward the non-Croatian population, especially Serbs, Jews and Roma." At the concentration camps, "the inmates (Jews and others, especially Serbs) were exposed to terror and difficult living conditions; many were killed upon arrival or later on." The crimes of the Ustasha are not concealed, but nor is there any explanation as to what the mysterious relation between the NDH and the "Ustasha regime" was supposed to have looked like.

In Snježana Koren's liberal-critical textbook, on the other hand, the ambiguities are openly discussed. The chapter on the formation of the NDH begins with a photograph of the Nazi invasion of Zagreb showing a jubilant mass, clearly raising the question of the responsibility of the population. Popular support for the Ustasha regime is also broached: "Why did so many welcome the proclamation of the NDH in 1941?" Koren is the only one to mention the civil war between the Partisans, the Serbian-royalist Chetniks and the Ustasha, and thus places the experience of the civilian population in a precise historical context (Đurić, in contrast, mentions only the abstract "suffering of the population"). What is unique in Koren's book is that the crimes of all involved parties are described extensively, yet without being equated. When it comes to the depiction of the victims of World War II, three of the books emotionalize the suffering of "our own" victims

through the inclusion of photographs, survivor's testimonies, and historical sources, while using a neutral, distanced language when writing about others. Bekavac and Jareb describe the Holocaust as "the most severe crime in contemporary history" and make a precise distinction between Nazi concentration and extermination camps in the chapter on general World War II history. They even report about the EU decision to introduce a Holocaust Memorial Day. But when it comes to the crimes of the Ustasha, they write neutrally about "repressions." The crimes they emotionalize are the murder by the partisans of fleeing Ustasha members, NDH soldiers, and Croatian civilians near Bleiburg in May 1945. The chapter on the Ustasha crimes contains no testimonies and only one photograph—of the Jasenovac flower memorial designed by the architect Bogdan Bogdanović in the 1960s; the chapter on Bleiburg, in contrast, contains numerous photographs of refugees and prisoners, and the testimony of one survivor who recalls witnessing a father being shot in front of his young son after attempting to approach him. In the other nationalist textbook (Đurić), Jasenovac is clearly designated as a death camp where "tens and tens of thousands of people perished"—a formulation that also sounds awkward in Croatian and suggests discomfort or uncertainty. The author then goes on to talk about the numerous Jews, Serbs, and Roma "who were killed"—the passive form is striking—without naming the Ustasha as the killers. The left-wing textbook from Krešimir Erdelja and Ivan Stojaković, on the other hand, stands in an anti-fascist tradition and deals with the victims of Jasenovac extensively, including three survivor testimonies; no survivor testimonies can be found in the chapter on Bleiburg, however. In her scholarly work, Koren, the author of the fourth, most multi-perspectival textbook, has criticized the depiction of certain victim groups as the "anonymous Other"⁸⁶; her textbook includes photographs, testimonies, and historical sources representing all victim groups. The range of narratives about World War II in textbooks approved by the Croatian ministry of education is thus very broad. Strikingly for a country that has just joined the EU, the official syllabus is most closely adhered to in the two nationalist textbooks, namely in the

86 Koren, "Nastava povijesti između historije i pamćenja," 249.

requirement to teach about the cultural achievements of the NDH, while the other two textbooks refuse to teach a revisionist version of history.

ARE POLITICS OF HISTORY RETREATING?

Professional historiography existed in Croatia ever since the after-war period until today, but this stands predominantly for the preoccupation with periods until the beginning of the twentieth century. Mirjana Gross represents historians from both the socialist and the post-socialist period who sought for methodological innovation and opposed the dominant political currents. Yet this did not apply to contemporary history, especially to the several modifications of World War II narrative as the founding myth of socialist Yugoslavia, revisionist Tuđman-Croatia and the post-1990s EU membership candidate. Serbian and Croatian nationalist historians dominated the field from the 1960s onward, while in the 1990s Tuđman and the new Bleiburg-historians imagined Croat suffering as similar to that of Jesus. Historical journals as the most exclusive historiography field did not reflect this development. Yet it would be completely misleading to fade out the dominance of the politics of history in the historical sphere and avoid the issue by calling nationalist historians “unprofessional.”

Pluralist approaches and a critique of the former revisionism only became possible during the consolidation of democracy from 2000 on, so it is no coincidence that Ivo and Slavko Goldstein’s book on the Holocaust in Zagreb and Croatia appeared only in 2001. But during the government of the former Tuđman party, the HDZ from 2003 to 2011, the need to modify the dominant historical narrative according to the emerging informal European memory standards again put World War II in the focus of dealing with the past. Prime Minister Ivo Sanader replaced the equalization of Bleiburg and Jasenovac with the Europe-compatible narrative of fighting against totalitarianism. He also modified the idea of Croat suffering according to the principles of “universalization of the Holocaust” when he equated it with the suffering of Jews in World War II and depicted the Serbs in the “Homeland War” of the 1990s as the new fascists. But this development was only

one part of the pluralist discourse, while president Mesić (re)established the anti-fascist narrative. History textbooks also reflect this pluralization of narratives and methodologies.

With the new center-left coalition that won the elections at the end of 2011, the EU entry in 2013 and the small number of contemporary witnesses left, World War II history might finally become a historiography issue. The question that currently shakes the society, dominates politics of history, and challenges historiography is the evaluation of the war of the 1990s and the consequences it has for the cohabitation of Serbs and Croats in Croatia, as the current conflict about Cyrillic town signs in communities with a strong Serb minority shows. Those parts of the younger generation who work with multi-perspective textbooks including interethnic learning might be able to deal with the (hi)story, but how about the others?

CHAPTER

3

Wars of Memory in Post-Communist Romania¹

Michael Shafir

As in many other former communist countries, a “competitive martyrdom” struggle erupted in Romania soon after the collapse of the former regime. By “competitive martyrdom” I understand the implicit or explicit attempt to exonerate the Romanian political community embodied by the state, or segments of that community, from either guilt or responsibility for having participated in World War II as a Nazi ally and from having perpetrated genocidal crimes against the Jews and the Roma. Coined by several scholars² in the context of debates around the extent, the limit or the desirability of emulating the alleged postwar denazification in Western Europe,³ competitive martyrdom is a complex issue, influenced not only by the immediate communist past and its treatment of the Holocaust in official history, but also, and above all, by socio-psychological factors linked to collective memory and to the social frameworks of the memory⁴ of specific groups within society. Furthermore, it entails also an international as-

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2 Chaumont, *La Concurrence des victimes*; Besançon, *Nenorocirea secolului*, 138; Rosenbaum, “Introduction to the First Edition,” 2.

3 “Alleged” because the process was stopped soon after the Nuremberg trials, and restarted in the late 1950s and particularly the 1960s. See Shafir, “Nürnberg II,” 557–82.

4 I am employing Maurice Halbwachs’ concept of “social frameworks.” See Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*.

pect, for the de-communizing polities strive to demonstrate their ap-
purtenance to the democratic “international regime” and its values, but
are obviously at pain when urged to confront collaboration.⁵

Unlike Holocaust denial,⁶ competitive martyrdom strives to associ-
ate the Holocaust to the epoch’s *Zeitgeist*; but while this attempt would
merely add one more layer to many earlier attempts at “trivializing”⁷
the Shoah by demonstrating, as it were, that it was just one more geno-
cide among many in history, competitive martyrdom is aiming higher.
Following in the footsteps of Ernst Nolte, who perceives Hitler and Na-
zism as being merely a response to Lenin and communism,⁸ competi-
tive martyrdom is bent on establishing that whatever sufferance perpe-
trators belonging to one’s own community caused to victims of the
Holocaust, this was merely a natural reaction to the earlier sufferance in-
duced by the victims on the community, and, moreover, that the num-
ber of the victims of communism exceeded that of Holocaust victims.

If Holocaust denial and Holocaust trivialization are by now likely
to stir negative reactions at international regime level, competitive
martyrdom is not only likely to squeeze in unsanctioned, but manages
to enlist the support of figures who can hardly be suspected of anti-
Semitism (as in the case of the deniers) or of subjectivity, ill-will, or ig-
norance (as in that of the trivializers). This is not only the result of
reminiscences of the “totalitarian model” that placed the Nazis and the
communists on the same footage,⁹ but also of apparently legitimate
calls stemming from East Central Europe for a “democratic memory”
that would take into account the ordeals of nations subjected to Stalin-
ist-imposed rule.¹⁰ The 2008 Declaration that called for establishing
August 23 (the date of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in

5 On “international regimes” see Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences.”

6 On Holocaust denial, see, among others, Gerstenfeld, *The Abuse of Holocaust Memory*.

7 I borrow the term from Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, xi–xii, but utilize it differently than Gay does. See Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization,’* 60. On “comparative trivialization” and the risks of its usage in the post-communist context, see also Todor Kuljić’s contribution to this volume.

8 Nolte, *Der Europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945*.

9 See the different contributions to Geyer and Fitzpatrick, *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*.

10 A good example is Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European.” For an approach somewhat similar to Mälksoo, see Daniela Koleva’s contribution to this volume.

1939) as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (meanwhile introduced in several European countries and in one form or another heeded by several European international organizations) is proof that the ongoing process is leading to what Dovid Katz has called "Holocaust obfuscation."¹¹

The main pillar on which both competitive martyrdom and Holocaust obfuscation lean is the "Double Genocide" theory or the "Symmetric Approach." The theory was first pioneered in Lithuania, spreading to its Baltic neighbors Estonia and Latvia, and eventually echoed all over the former communist countries. According to Katz, Holocaust obfuscation involves several consecutively interconnected objectives: "Deflate Nazi crimes; inflate Soviet crimes; make their 'equality' into a new sacrosanct principle for naive Westerners who like the sound of 'equality'; redefine 'genocide' by law to include just about any Soviet crime; find ways to turn local killers into heroes (usually as supposed 'anti-Soviet' patriots); fault victims and survivors, especially those who lived to join the anti-Nazi resistance."¹²

It must not be inferred from the above that the U.S.-born Lithuanian Yiddish scholar¹³ (or the author of these lines, for that matter¹⁴) in any way attempt to minimize the sufferance of East Central Europeans under communism. To place under the same umbrella category of "genocide" the atrocities of what has come to be referred to under the synthetic name of Gulag following the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's famous book with the same name, is, however, wrong on several counts. One must never lose sight of the two atrocities' end objectives. Viewed from this perspective, the results are the Holocaust was genocidal, whereas the Gulag was a crime against humanity. International law adopted after the end of the war distinguishes between the two, although both crimes are imprescriptible.¹⁵

¹¹ Katz, "On Three Definitions: Genocide, Holocaust Denial, Holocaust Obfuscation," as well as Katz, "Prague's Declaration of Disgrace," and Katz, "The Seventy Years Declaration and the Simple Truth."

¹² Katz, "The Seventy Years Declaration and the Simple Truth." Many of the Slovenian specifics of the obfuscation are discussed in Oto Luthar's contribution to this volume.

¹³ Katz, "On three definitions," 272.

¹⁴ Shafir, "Questions and Answers on the Holocaust-Gulag 'Competitive Martirology.'"

¹⁵ Paradoxically, at the famous Nuremberg trials (November 20, 1945–October 1, 1946), the

Why, then, does the “Double Genocide” approach insist on placing the two under the same category, when at first sight the second should be sufficient to punish the Gulag’s perpetrators? Paradoxical as this may sound, one reason should be sought in the success of the international community of Holocaust survivors and “second-and-third” generation survivors to make the Holocaust be perceived as the “paradigmatic genocide.” Somehow this created the feeling that unless placed in the genocidal category, no community’s suffering stands a chance of being similarly acknowledged at an international level. This first led to the trivialization of Holocaust in an inflation-like idiom (loss of value by over-utilization of uncovered currency) where people often speak of a “Holocaust of the bees,” a “Holocaust of intellectuals,” etc.), and eventually to Holocaust obfuscation. A second reason (one that is particularly relevant to Romania, but by no means to it alone) is to be found in the well-documented neglect of Holocaust research and historical debate under communist regimes,¹⁶ combined with what has been termed as the universally natural search for “positive heroes” contributing to regime (but also to opposition or political movement) legitimation at times of “transition.”¹⁷ As is well known, communist regimes everywhere subjected the Holocaust to oblivion, or at best to manipulation. To utilize Shari Cohen’s terminology, they indulged into “state-organized national forgetting.”¹⁸ One of the grounds for doing so was the fact that these regimes claimed they were the embodiment of dialectical materialism, according to which mankind’s history is the history of class struggle. But

accused were charged with the latter crime, *not the former*. That is because only in December 1948 was the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, coming into force on January 12, 1951, after its ratification by twenty states. Crimes Against Humanity in international law, on the other hand, date as far back as 1915, having been first used as a concept in the declaration made by the governments of France, Great Britain, and Russia in reference to the Turkish massacres of the minority Armenian population. See Schabas, “Crimes Against Humanity,” 78.

16 See Braham, *Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*. For an excellent, updated debate on the treatment of the Holocaust and the reasons for its neglect under Communism in general, see Cioflâncă, “A ‘Grammar of Exculpation’ in Communist Historiography,” 245–50.

17 An exemplification (one among numerous) is provided in Ferenc Laczó’s contribution to this volume.

18 Cohen, *Politics Without a Past*.

fascism, Nazism, and its local emulators in East Central Europe never made class distinctions when it came to the elimination of Jews. To fit into their ideological conceptual map, Jews had to be, first, transmogrified by these regimes into “fighters for progress” and then simply relegated to oblivion. But since they also claimed to be the vanguard of a mass movement enjoying large popularity, these regimes were still confronted by the necessity of explaining collaboration with the Nazis or the even more embarrassing native fascist movements and anti-Semitism. Consequently the participation of local collaborators in the Holocaust was reduced to alleged unrepresentative individuals belonging to “the fringe of society.”

Any political regime, however, is in need of “positive history” and of “hero models” that it can claim as precedent. Why should, then, Iron Guard leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Marshal Ion Antonescu, Admiral Miklós Horthy and Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi, President Jozef Tiso, Croat Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić or (though the historical context is somewhat different) the Slovene Domobranci not re-emerge as “model figures” of national heroes, whose only fault rests in their having (nilly rather than willy) supported or allied themselves with those who were fighting communism and/or the traditional enemy of their nation? Their crimes having been ignored, why should not the Baltic Waffen SS volunteers who fought the Soviets not emerge as hero models, as one had hardly heard about some of the same people’s participation in the extermination of Jews even before the Nazi’s arrival to witness the massacres or of having served as guards in extermination camps? For, as Timothy Snyder has shown, one of the greatest Hitler propaganda successes was to imbue the populations of Eastern Europe subjected to Soviet rule in 1940 or to partial Soviet occupation with the equation “Jew = Bolshevik.”¹⁹ Yet this was only partly the merit of that propaganda. “The idea that only Jews served communism was convenient not just for the occupiers but

19 “Entering the lands that they had conceded to Stalin in 1939, the Germans used NKVD crimes as a propaganda justification for the bloody massacres of Jews in summer 1941, in which Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Poles and others took part” (Snyder, “Echoes from the Killing Fields of the East,” *The Guardian*, September 28, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/sep/27/secondworldwar-poland>).

for some of the occupied as well.”²⁰ Competitive martyrdom proves that some ideas die hard in East Central Europe.

To understand why, we turn to Maurice Halbwachs’ pioneering contributions to collective memory studies and his insistence on memory being particularly powerful when constructed around family and peer group values. While it would be untrue to claim that all those persecuted under communism shared the values of interwar radical right (indeed some were opponents of those values), it is nonetheless true that the politically hounded shared the same persecutions while imprisoned or subjected to other maltreatments. Under that situation, members of families depicted as class enemies and subjected to social isolation were hardly inclined to make distinctions between themselves and families of genuine extreme right wingers whose fathers or grandfathers had aimed at placing in power one set of totalitarianism against the now persecuting set. Among the persecuted, there was solidarity both in the camps and outside. Obviously, there was also cognitive dissonance between what was being taught by official history and what was whispered at home and peer groups. In post-communism, such cognitive dissonance either disappears or becomes the object of *the* struggle for memory.

Holocaust students are familiar with Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “post-memory,” that is, that process by which the memory of the Shoah is passed on and reconstructed from generation to generation.²¹ American sociologist Robert Bellah and his associates have shown that side by side with the large national community “defined by its history and by the character of its representative leaders” there exist smaller, but just as important “communities of memory.” Bellah and his associates define these as “practices of commitment” that “define the patterns of loyalty and obligation that keep the community alive.”²² What happens when in a post-communist situation, the memory of one community contradicts that of the other? Furthermore, what happens when it contradicts official memory? It is entirely possible that—

²⁰ Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, 194, 196.

²¹ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

²² Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, cited in Olick, Vinitzki-Seroussi and Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 229–30.

once again, but now in a democratic environment—a powerful cognitive dissonance would prevail over official memory, as demonstrated by a group of German socio-psychologists in the volume suggestively entitled *Opa War Kein Nazi* [Grandpa Was No Nazi].²³

Jeffrey Alexander's concept of "cultural trauma" can help us further elucidate this situation. In what is basically a Freudian approach, the American sociologist writes that a cultural trauma "occurs when members of a collectivity feel that they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memory forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways." The construction of such cultural traumas, he adds, makes it possible for "social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively [to] identify the existence and the source of human suffering, but [to] 'take on board' some significant responsibility for it."

In other words, the traumatic event is one that affects "Individual security [which] is anchored in structures of emotional and cultural expectations that provide a sense of security and capability." One deals here with "expectations and capabilities [that], in turn, are rooted in the sturdiness of the collectivities of which individuals are part."

Cultural traumas thus become what Yael Zerubavel has termed as "master commemorative narratives," by which she means a narrative that "focuses on the group's distinct social identity and highlights its historical development," thus structuring collective memory.²⁴

There is no reason to desist from applying what Zerubavel does in analyzing the context of the emergence of Zionist collective memory to post-communist East Central Europe. Just as in the former case, the latter encounters communities of memory that underwent a cultural trauma. In search of positive heroes and against the background of communist Holocaust neglect and/or distortion, the Double Genocide approach is fast becoming in these countries *the* master commemorative narrative, one in which the myth of anti-communist resistance finds both hero models and exculpation for the past. Within the frame-

²³ Welzer, Moller and Tschugnall, *Opa war kein Nazi*.

²⁴ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 6.

work of a century dominated by a paradigmatic genocide, competitive martyrdom is the synthesis of all these elements. It strives to provide an alternative dominant narrative, not an alternative paradigm. In the substituted narrative, the collective trauma of de-nationalization and Sovietization prevails over any attempt to drive attention to the suffering of Jews and Roma during the Holocaust, the more so as Jews continue to be perceived as instruments of communization. To paraphrase Alexander, it is not facts that matter, but their perceived harmfulness.

Let us stop at this point and introduce a related concept, namely that of “cognitive” or “mental mapping.”²⁵ The concept has been used in general for analyzing decision-making processes at international leadership level, but all individuals make decisions all the time and are influenced by their earlier “cognitive mapping” of the order of things. A cognitive map, one is told by Sandra Breux and Min Reuchamps, might ultimately be reduced to the formula: “Cognitive map = perception + imagination.”²⁶ Cultural elites are strategically placed to articulate collective perceptions and better equipped than the public at large to utilize imagination. To do so, however, their cognitive map must be “triggered” by some event of the recent or more remote past.²⁷ The “trigger” may have lain latent, but is activated upon confrontation with a seemingly familiar pattern of the past. When related to environmental-geopolitical perceptions of the community’s historical experience, the cognitive map is referred to as a “geographical mental map.”²⁸ Collective or substituted traumas may become powerful triggers, I believe.

25 On cognitive mapping, see Roberts, *Mapping Cultures*. On mental mapping, see Alan K. Henrikson, “The Geographical ‘Mental Maps’ of American Foreign Policy Makers.”

26 Breux and Reuchamps, “Introduction,” as quoted in Mitrache, “L’Enjeu de l’Europe Centrale-Orientale pour la diplomatie française sous François Mitterrand dans le contexte de la question allemande,” 21.

27 “Mental maps, whose psychological counterparts are synapse patterns in the cell mass of the brain, are often latent. They may be thought of as ‘triggered’ when a person makes a spatial decision, that is, when the individual confronts a problem that obliges him or her to choose among alternative movements in space” (Henrikson, “The Geographical ‘Mental Maps’ of American Foreign Policy Makers,” 498).

28 Henrikson speaks in this connection of “an ordered but continually adapting structure of the mind—alternatively conceived as a process—by reference to which a person acquires codes, stores, recalls, reorganizes, and applies in thought and in action, information about his or her large-scale geographical environment, in part or in its entirety” (*ibid.*).

POST-MEMORY AND THE INHERITED
OFFICIAL NARRATIVE

Romanian historiography under communism has been scrutinized in studies published in the West by both Romanian and non-Romanian scholars. Following the collapse of communism, several local historians have also tackled²⁹ what remains (and is likely to long remain so) a very sensitive issue. Naturally, views differ, with some in the latter category making an obvious effort to justify their self-imposed prudence by insisting on the merit of having stayed away from the more blatant forms of nationalism characteristic of the Nicolae Ceaușescu regime³⁰; others, while somewhat critical of the more extreme forms of that feature are nonetheless depicting the post-1965 period as a return to genuine values that in itself justifies their own collaboration with the regime.³¹ Yet a third category, after 1990, courageously set up upon demolishing the mythology of national communism as well as dominant myths of Romanian historiography writ large,³² only to end in distancing themselves from what they began to perceive as harmful emulations of Western-imported “political correctness” when it came to the treatment of Jews and Roma by the Antonescu regime.³³ In one form or another, all these historians embraced one shade or another of the Double Genocide approach, and this includes those servants of Clio with little to be reproached for under communism.³⁴ Yet among these elderly or middle-aged generations, there were also some notable exceptions.³⁵ And beginning with the new

29 Papacostea, “Captive Clio”; Zub, *Orizont inchis*; Georgescu, *Tot un fel de istorie*; Florin Constantiniu, *De la Răutu*; Ioniță, *O viață, un destin*; Stan, *Istorie și politică*.

30 See Zub, *Orizont inchis*, 106, 168.

31 For example, Constantiniu, *De la Răutu*, and Stan, *Istorie și politică*.

32 Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*; Boia, *Jocul cu trecutul. Istoria între adevăr și ficțiune*; Boia, *Două secole de mitologie națională*; Boia, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului*; Boia, *Miturile comunismului românesc*.

33 See *infra* for Boia.

34 For example, Rădulescu Zoner. See *infra*.

35 See, for example, Papacostea’s article on Antonescu’s rehabilitation attempts in *Lumea magazine*, no. 12, December 1995; Papacostea, “Captive Clio”; Pippidi, “Miturile trecutului-răspântia prezentului”; Pippidi, “Anti-Semitism in Romania After 1989.” On Papacostea’s and Pippidi’s attitude toward the attempts to rehabilitate Antonescu, see also Eskenasy, “Historiographers Against the Antonescu Myth,” 271–94. The name of historian Lucian

millennium, one remarks that *some* members (by no means all) of a new generation of historians (and political scientists, for that matter) distance themselves from their predecessors the treatment of the recent past.³⁶

The story of nationalist revival among Romania's cultural elites mobilized to legitimize a party that had earlier attempted to de-nationalize political culture,³⁷ as well as the saga of the post-communist recrudescence of extreme nationalism, of the Marshal Ion Antonescu cult and attempts to resurrect the Iron Guard while "cleansing" both of crimes, have largely been told, and need not preoccupy us here. Suffice it to keep in mind that for historians, regarding themselves as repositories of national aspirations along other intellectuals, Sovietization had constituted a genuine collective trauma.³⁸ Mention should also be made of the fact that the Romanian communist regime, gradually substituting the former extra-systemic legitimacy with an intra-systemic one beginning with the late 1950s³⁹ became the main beneficiary of its former failure to eliminate from political culture one of its pillars, namely nationalism.⁴⁰ The "romantic Leninism" that emerged under the Ceaușescu regime⁴¹ never intended to give up on molding the "new man" in the image of its leader. If Stalinism viewed superstructure as "national in form and socialist in content," "Ceaușescuism"⁴² viewed base *and* superstructure alike as national in form *and* content at

Nastasă should also be mentioned here. See in particular Nastasă, *Minorități etnoculturale*; Nastasă, *Antisemitismul universitar românesc în România (1919–1939)*.

36 For example, Adrian Cioflâncă (see *supra*) and several contributions in the volume edited by him and Andi Mihalache: Cioflâncă and Mihalache, *Istoria recentă altfel*; Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence*; Iordachi, *Comparative Fascist Studies*; Chioveanu, *Fețele fascismului*; Chioveanu, *Death Delivered, Death Postponed*; Turda and Weining, *Blood and Homeland*; Butaru, *Racism românesc*.

37 See Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*; Shafir, "Political Culture, Intellectual Dissent and Intellectual Consent"; Shafir, "The Men of the Archangel Revisited"; Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*.

38 On the Sovietization of Romanian culture in general, see Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă*.

39 Shafir, "Romania," 127–29.

40 Shafir, *Romania. Politics, Economic and Society*, 51.

41 On "Romantic Leninism," see Copilaș, *Geneza leninismului romantic*, 402–508.

42 Trond Gilberg first utilized the term. See Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania*, 49–56.

one and the same time.⁴³ This created a cat-and-mouse game for those members of the historians' guild who had hoped that the winds of change that seemed to blow in the period 1964–70 would become a fondling breeze. Yet in a political culture characterized, among other things, by passivity and submission to the powers-that-be,⁴⁴ they readily paid lip service where it was due as long as the collective trauma of the 1948–58 sovietized Romania was safely behind. Part of the same trauma, it should be noted, had been the disproportionate Jewish presence among officials supervising cultural life in general and historiography in particular.⁴⁵ Names such as Iosif Chişinevschi, Leonte Răutu, and Mihail Roller⁴⁶ triggered a Pavlovian-like shiver among the elderly generation of Romanian historians.

The official beginnings of national communism can be safely traced to the so-called April 1964 Declaration of Independence of the Communist Party (PCR), adopted one year before the death of its leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Soon after, under his successor, Nicolae Ceauşescu, nationalism began to be exacerbated to unprecedented dimensions. This was also reflected by a radical departure from the way Romania's recent past had been hitherto reflected in historiographical output. A member of Romania's younger generation of post-communist historians who examined the main products of official historiography produced in the 1970s and 1980s found seven main features for the period. He fittingly placed them under the all-encompassing title of a "grammar of exculpation."⁴⁷

43 Schöpflin, "Romanian Nationalism."

44 There were a few exceptions, such as Papacostea, who was imprisoned for the "sin" of having visited the French Library and nonetheless never published any "toeing the line" articles after his liberation. Also, David Prodan, a left-wing activist arrested by the Antonescu regime in 1943 who, witnessing the growing gap between "reality and the practice of new life" refused to renew his PCR membership in 1947 and withstood all pressures to do so, arguing that he wants to concentrate on historical research. See Prodan, *Memorii*, 50–51.

45 For an analysis of the reasons for such disproportionate presence, see Câmpeanu, "Din nou despre antisemitism"; Câmpeanu, *Ceauşescu*, 130–95. See also Roth, *Naţionalism sau Democratism*, 183–99.

46 For biographical sketches of Chişinevschi and Răutu, see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 259, 267–68. For Roller, see the works mentioned in notes 42 and 44.

47 Cioflâncă, "A 'grammar of exculpation' in communist historiography," 254–260. See also Braham, "The Exculpatory History of Romanian Nationalists."

First, “fascism” was generally described in these works as an “import product” devoid of any popular backing and “imposed from outside” with the complicity of a small, non-representative and “retrograde” minority. Second, Romania itself was described as a victim rather than an aggressor state, a country “thrown into Germany’s arms” by its betrayal of Western powers that had backed down from their guarantee of Romania’s borders of 1940. The Iron Guard was described as having come to power with the help of Germany, as was Antonescu, and the decision to join the war was said to have been imposed on Romania by the Germans. Third, the atrocities committed during the war were said to have met the opposition of the overwhelming majority of the Romanian people. The scholar notes (and this is his fourth finding) a difference between the manner in which the Iron Guard and Antonescu were treated in the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and the Ceaușescu period. Gradually the Romanian historians began to make a distinction between the Iron Guard and the regime of the marshal. The former continued to be described in largely pejorative terms and to be depicted as peripheral to Romanian society. Marshal Antonescu, however, began to be exonerated and to be depicted as a personality whose decisions were more a reflection of a “no-choice” situation imposed on him by Romania’s post-1940 international situation, rather than a matter of personal choice and of adherence to an ultra-nationalist, racist ideology. If Ștefan Andrei (a typical national communist who was foreign minister between 1978–85) is to be trusted, the trend had been introduced by Dej personally in 1964.⁴⁸

48 According to Andrei, Dej rejected the reference to Antonescu in a draft for a speech he was to deliver on Romania’s national day, on August 23, 1964, where Antonescu was cast in the negative colors used on earlier similar occasions. The RCP leader is cited as telling Răutu and Ștefan Voicu (at that time editor-in-chief of the PCR monthly, *Lupta de clasă*) who were both Jewish, that in 1940, when Antonescu took over the country’s leadership, Romania’s situation had been bleak: “The Russians had taken from us Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. The Hungarians had taken the northern and western part of Transylvania and they had reached Brașov. The Bulgarians had taken the Cadrilator. The Liberals and the Peasantists went into hiding, you know how the Social Democrats were; as for us, Communists, oh, dear, oh, mine! [*vai de mama noastră!*]. The country could vanish. One man—Antonescu—was ready to assume power. He made mistakes, but in that particular moment he was the only one ready to assume responsibility. Let historians and our children judge better what went on then. But don’t put those words in my mouth.” Betea, *I se spunea Machiavelli*, 198.

Fifth, anti-Semitism was rarely, if at all, mentioned as a defining component of fascism. If mentioned at all, anti-Semitism figured only in order to demonstrate an alleged "Romanian exceptionalism." Abandoning the Dimitrovia definition of fascism,⁴⁹ in a book published in 1984, historian Mihai Fătu was writing that the by-now sacral definition was "not applicable to some countries" because "One cannot talk about 'the most imperialist elements of financing capital' in Romania, which was neither an imperialist country, nor dominated by financial capital, as the situation was in Germany or even Italy [that were] large capitalist powers that reached the imperialist stage of evolution that promotes aggression and territorial expansion."⁵⁰ The roots of this turnabout must be sought in the speech delivered by Ceaușescu back in 1966,⁵¹ in which he first lambasted the Comintern for having advocated the dismemberment of Romania as a national state. Without having pronounced the words "Bessarabia and northern Bukovina," a green light had practically been given to Romanian historians to give vent to what was to be turned into the dominant narrative of collective trauma. And they would make plenty of use of the permission. According to Fătu, fascism in Antonescu-led Romania had never reached "maturity" in the sense that institutions typical of that regime had been merely designed, but never set up in practice.⁵² Its purpose was that of leading astray "both the large popular masses" and the "Romanian bourgeoisie" into believing that "this would solve all their problems" and into "backing the regime and labouring for its needs and at its command."⁵³ Yet Romanian society at large and the Romanian nation as a whole was never "fascized"; "on the contrary, they reacted vigorously against fascism perceived as a phenomenon alien to its sentiments and aspirations."⁵⁴

Against this Fătu-made background of "fascism without fascists," the main victims of the regime continued to be depicted as commu-

49 "The open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital." Dimitrov, *Report to the Seventh Congress Communist International* 1935, 40.

50 Fătu, *Contribuții*, 15–16.

51 Ceaușescu, *Partidul Comunist Român*.

52 Fătu, *Contribuții*, 301.

53 Ibid., 51–53, 150–51, 157–65.

54 Ibid., 301.

nists, just as in Stalinist historiography. According to Fătu, repressive “measures were directed above all against the Communists and other patriots who rose against the regime and its entire fabric.” The Jewish victims, on the other hand, would be rarely mentioned, and their numbers would be minimized as much as possible. This distortion of the identity of the Antonescu regime’s main victims would play into the hands of post-communist negationists and trivializers, who would either entirely deny crimes, attribute them to the Germans (alone, or in collaboration with “fringe” local elements), or place them in the category of general war collateral victims.⁵⁵ But and above all, it would be utilized by partisans of the Double Genocide approach, for whom Jews were only targeted because of their pro-Soviet acts during the war. And by depicting Jews as the main instruments of the country’s post-war communization as well, the Double Genocide theory would not only be turned into a self-defensive and “reactive” exculpatory explanation, but also into one facilitating competitive martyrdom: any anti-communist resistant, regardless of motivation, deserves a place in the national Pantheon.

To understand why this was so, one should remember that by now the policies of the regime were characterized by “xenophobic communism”⁵⁶ and that Hungary and the Hungarian minority in Romania were its primary targets. As the regime approached its end, Nicolae Ceaușescu was spearheading the front of reform “rejectionists” in East Central Europe,⁵⁷ while Hungary had long been one of the most eloquent advocates of reforms. The difference in the treatment of the Holocaust in the two countries is, indeed striking. Numerous works, in part destined for export, were now produced in Romania on the destruction of the Transylvanian Jewry as part of the “image-war” with the neighboring country—a war that in many ways would continue after the demise of communism, leading to the earlier reprinting of Matatias Carp’s *Black Book* (albeit in abridged version) in Budapest rather than Bucharest.⁵⁸

55 Shafir, *Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization.’*

56 See Shafir, “Xenophobic Communism.”

57 Shafir, “Eastern Europe’s ‘Rejectionists.’”

58 Carp, *Cartea neagră*. For the fate of the book under communism and for its post-communist fate, see Ioanid, “Romania,” 236–37.

The rehabilitation of Antonescu was (apparently as a preliminary step) undertaken “by proxy.” A central role in this operation was played by Iosif Constantin Drăgan (1917–2008). At his Italy-based publishing house between 1986–90 Drăgan published four volumes of articles and documents,⁵⁹ which one could not possibly have had access to without the regime acquiescence. As Victor Eskenasy wrote in reference to Drăgan’s role under the former regime, the materials included in the collection were all taken from the archives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Party’s Central Committee, and many of them “remained inaccessible to Romanian researchers *even after 1989*.” The materials had been obtained due to the excellent ties Drăgan entertained with Mușat and Ardeleanu. They first appeared without referencing the archival holdings from which the various items had been taken. “Eventually, after several critical comments in exile publications, Drăgan admitted the origin—for historians, the major secret! —of the documents that had been selected, edited, and annotated in Bucharest.”⁶⁰ His right-hand in the operation was historian Gheorghe Buzatu.

Drăgan’s role in the resurgence of post-communist anti-Semitism in general, and in the campaign to rehabilitate Antonescu in particular, cannot, indeed, be underestimated. The evidence concerning his collaboration with the Ceaușescu authorities in the rehabilitation campaign is by now a matter of public record, as indeed are his close ties with those who, after the demise of the regime, would figure prominently among Antonescu’s champions. As former communist official Paul Niculescu-Mizil mentioned in his memoirs, Drăgan began visiting his country of origin in the late 1960s⁶¹ and was frequently a guest of Romania’s second *Conducător*—as both Ceaușescu and Antonescu called themselves.

According to information published in a Romanian weekly⁶² and never challenged in court by Drăgan, he had been recruited as an informer for the communist secret police sometime between 1950 and 1955, originally with the purpose of gathering information on the émi-

59 Antonescu, *Mareșalul României și războaiele de reîntregire*.

60 Eskenasy, “The Holocaust in Romanian Historiography,” 192–93. Author’s emphasis.

61 Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *De la Comintern la Comunism Național*, 342.

62 *Academia Cațavencu* (Bucharest weekly) no. 9, March 7–13, 1995.

gré Romanian community in general, and the Iron Guard exile in particular. The *Securitate* decided to exploit Drăgan's "original sin" (he had been an Iron Guard sympathizer and had published a pro-Iron Guard brochure in Mussolini's Italy as a student)⁶³ in its own very precise manner. It was only at a later stage that the now wealthy Romanian émigré was put in the service of Ceausescu's national communist drive, of which Antonescu's rehabilitation was part and parcel of. Eventually he became a very important cog in the *Securitate*'s machinery utilized (under the code name "Olteanu") to influence, control, and manipulate the Romanian emigration.⁶⁴

"Patriotism," in other words a cognitive map on which (since the mid-1960s) the Russian danger and the Hungarian irredenta occupied a central place, and fear of their alleged internal pawns (the "Cominternists") just as central a spot, now bridged between yesterday's foes. It was a first clear indication that collective traumas may unify where ideologies split.⁶⁵ As an enthusiastic promoter of avant la (communist) lettre "Tracomania,"⁶⁶ Drăgan, a self-taught history professor,⁶⁷ found enough common ground with the Ceaușescu regime to combine business with nationalism⁶⁸ and personal megalomania. And he would find a lot of common ground with Romanian historians of a similar persuasion. Drăgan returned to Romania after the demise of communism and died one of the country's richest men.

On October 16, 1990, Drăgan and Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the future leader of the chauvinist and anti-Semitic Greater Romania Party (PRM, founded in June 1991), set up the Marshal Antonescu League, as well as

63 For Drăgan's Iron Guard Past, see Țiu, "Exilul legionar după al doilea război mondial," 149–53.

64 Zamfirescu, *Cărțile Securității*, 13–14, 123–24.

65 Another clear example in this case is that of famous journalist Pamfil Șeicaru. Șeicaru was sentenced to death in absentia after World War II, but Ceaușescu's exacerbated nationalism convinced him to work for the regime under cover. For details see Zamfirescu, *Cărțile Securității*, 93–243.

66 See, for instance, Drăgan, *Noi, tricii și istoria noastră multimilenară*.

67 After his return to Romania he would set up a private university in his native town of Lugoj.

68 He founded and owned several media outlets through which he promoted extreme nationalism, such as *Renașterea bănățeană* and *Redeșteptarea*, or *Națiunea*, as well as the Lugoj-based radio-station Nova FM and two printing houses in Lugoj and Bucharest. However, he never financed other extreme nationalist publications such as *Europa* (editor-in-chief Ilie Neacșu) or *România mare* (owned by Corneliu Vadim Tudor), unlike what Kathrine Verdery (*National Ideology under Socialism*, 317) and I myself ("Anti-Semitism in the Post-Communist Era," 374) once believed.

a foundation bearing the same name, with himself as president of both. Gheorghe Buzatu was at that stage a deputy chairman of the League. In April 2001 Buzatu took over the chairmanship, while Drăgan became honorary president. At the same time, the league and the foundation were merged. Buzatu shared with Drăgan more than “patriotism” and admiration for Antonescu. Like Drăgan, he had been a *Securitate* informer since 1975. And he also shared with Drăgan and the revamped *Securitate* an anti-Jewish phobia.⁶⁹ Between 2000–4 Buzatu represented in Parliament the PRM, being a deputy chairman of the Senate.

OFFICIAL MEMORY VS. POST-MEMORY

In the wake of Governmental Ordinance 31 issued in 2002, which forbade the denial of the Holocaust and the cult of its perpetrators, the Marshal Antonescu League changed its name (but not its act) into the League of Romania’s Marshals. I have discussed elsewhere the circumstances that forced Romania to reluctantly agree that “international regime” constraints be placed on the Antonescu cult in order to secure NATO and the European Union membership. Intertwined were also circumstances of more personal nature, linked to then-president Ion Iliescu’s attempts to atone for indulging into comparative trivialization of the Holocaust in an interview with an Israeli journalist, which was widely circulated in the United States and elsewhere.⁷⁰ Jointly, these motivations led to the setting up of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania chaired by Professor Elie Wiesel in October 2003 and the publication in November 2004 of the Commission’s Final Report, accepted and endorsed by the Romanian head of state.⁷¹ With the acceptance of the Commission’s findings and the start of the implementation of its recommendations, the Romanian state as such seemed to acknowledge and assume responsibility for participation in the Holocaust, thus turning that episode into official memory. In line with the

69 For details, see note 2 in Andrei Muraru’s review of the book *Avram Bunaciu, Biografie. Reflecții. Corespondență*, in *Represiune și control social în România comunistă*, 453 [450–55]. Florin Constantiniu prefaced the book, with an afterword by Buzatu.

70 Shafir, “Memory, Memorials and Membership.”

71 Friling, Ioanid and Ionescu, *Final Report*.

recommendations, the government issued an official declaration acknowledging the report and endorsing in full its contents and conclusions; its representatives participate in the commemoration of the Holocaust on October 9 (the date when the deportation of Jews to Transnistria began); a national memorial monument to the victims of the Holocaust has been erected in central Bucharest and a government-sponsored National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania named after Elie Wiesel was set up in 2005 and tasked with the further implementation of the recommendations.

But historians' master commemorative narrative does not change in line with official memory, and the Romanians are no exception. The grammar of exculpation's legacy was sensed by the Commission itself when it pointed out that during debates in parliament ahead of approving Governmental Ordinance 31/2002 and transforming it into permanent legislation⁷² "two commissions of the Romanian Senate proposed amending the law by defining the Holocaust as limited only to actions organised by the Nazi authorities, thereby excluding the Romanian experience in which Romanian officials, not the Nazis, organised the exterminations."⁷³ Gheorghe Buzatu played a prominent role in these attempts, although he no longer was a member of the legislature. He proposed that in the legislation prohibiting denial, the Holocaust should be defined as "the systematic massive extermination of the Jewish population in Europe organised by the Nazi authorities during the WWII."⁷⁴ Since there had been no "massive" extermination of Jews in Romania but in occupied Transnistria and since the Nazis had not perpetrated the extermination there, *by definition* the law would have applied only to those claiming that the Germans had not exterminated Jews. This was a typical example of what I had called "selective negationism,"⁷⁵ which does not deny the Holocaust as having taken place elsewhere but excludes any participation of members of one's own nation in its perpetration.

⁷² This happened only in 2006, that is with a delay of four years after the Ordinance's publication. See Law 107, *Monitorul Oficial al României*, no. 377, Part 3, May 3, 2006.

⁷³ Friling, Ioanid and Ionescu, *Final Report*, 390.

⁷⁴ Mediafax, July 26, 2002.

⁷⁵ Shafir, *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization."*

But Buzatu's role did not stop here. His prolific publications after 1990 make him stand out in admiration and defense of Romania's interwar radical right as few did overtly, except amateur pseudo-historians and pundits. This includes the Iron Guard and its founder and leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.⁷⁶ It also includes constant efforts to depict the Jews in general as subversive communist agents.⁷⁷ Buzatu was also the first historian in Romania to claim that the only "real" Holocaust has been that perpetrated by Jews against Romanians during the communization of Bessarabia and Bukovina in 1940 and after Romania's own communization after the war. He did so in a brochure printed by a publisher with an unmistakable name: Majadahonda—the place where Legionary (Iron Guard) "martyrs" Ion Moța and Vasile Marin died in January 1937 while fighting on Franco's side in the Spanish Civil War.⁷⁸ The spirit of Holocaust obfuscation was thus fully reproduced by Buzatu: justification of crimes committed against Jews and the rehabilitation of the perpetrators by "demonstrating" that they were acts imposed by Romanian self-defensive postures. One year before his death (2013), Buzatu edited jointly with neo-Legionary activist George Roncea twenty-seven volumes of archival material by and on the Legion's founder, Codreanu.⁷⁹ As it was revealed after his death, Buzatu, writing under the pen name "Koba" (Stalin's underground nickname) to drive home a point, contributed many articles to the blog regularly published by Romania's most vitriolic Holocaust denier and anti-Semite, Ion Coja.⁸⁰ It is not, therefore, surprising to find Buzatu referring with disdain to the Final Report published by the Wiesel Commission in a collective history volume published by the Romanian Academy.⁸¹

Others historians would follow suit, such as Sibiu-based Corvin Lupu. In an article published in the journal *Transilvania* in 2005, Lupu

76 See (among others) Treptow and Buzatu, "Introducere"; Buzatu, Ciucanu, and Sandache, *Radiografia dreptei românești*.

77 See Buzatu, *Românii în arhivele Kremlinului*; Buzatu and Chirîțoiu, *Agresiunea comunismului în România*; and Buzatu, *Din istoria secretă*.

78 Buzatu, *Așa a început Holocaustul împotriva poporului român*.

79 Buzatu and Roncea, *Documente din arhiva Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. Opera Omnia*.

80 I "owe" the information to his admirer and collaborator, Victor Roncea. See Roncea, "Ultimul Mesaj Al Profesorului Gh. Buzatu: A Sosit, Netăgăduit, Momentul Adevărului. Iar Acesta Se Produce Pe Internet."

81 See Buzatu, "Istoriografia și izvoarele."

rejected the Final Report's findings,⁸² specifying that "the idea that in Romania a genocide (Holocaust) has been perpetrated against the Jewish population cannot be accepted. On the contrary, in my opinion the Jewish people should be grateful to the Romanian people, a fact that has been acknowledged for several decades."

Eight years later Lupu and his son, a junior lecturer at the same Sibiu faculty his father had for many years headed as dean, published a volume titled *History of International Relations. Europe between 1919–1947*. Not surprisingly, the tome was prefaced by Buzatu, who, among other things, noted that the authors "draw attention to the sometimes overwhelming role played by international Jewry both on world and on Romanian stage" between 1919–47. The infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* might have been defended on the same grounds. According to Buzatu, the authors had the guts to demonstrate that the Jews "made a decisive contribution to setting up and the development of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and the dissemination of Communist ideology in Europe."⁸³ Indeed, a whole chapter in the volume is titled "The evolution of the world Communist movement. The decisive role of Jews."⁸⁴

Were Buzatu and a presumably small and isolated circle of admirers pursuing a quixotic war? Not quite. Well aware that they were important collective trauma agents (to utilize Alexander's term), President Ion Iliescu in December 2004 decorated both Buzatu and his party leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, with high state orders, as he was ending his presidential term.⁸⁵ Both had been harshly criticized in the Commission's Final Report.⁸⁶ In protest, the Commission's chairman, Elie Wiesel, returned to Iliescu the medal conferred on him in July 2002.⁸⁷ The inherited narrative had thus prevailed over official

82 Lupu, "Impactul problematicei," as quoted in Florian, "Holocaustul ca subiect legislativ," 209–10.

83 Ibid., 8.

84 Lupu and Lupu, *Istoria relațiilor internaționale*, 77–88.

85 Tudor was awarded the highest Romanian distinction, "The Star of Romania," while Buzatu was decorated with the order of "Faithful Service." Mediafax, December 13, 2004.

86 See Friling, Ioanid, and Ionescu, *Final Report*, 350–351, 353 for Tudor; 321, 348, 350, 355–59, 361, 367 for Buzatu.

87 "Elie Wiesel îi Trimite Pachet 'Steaua Romaniei' Lui Ion Iliescu," *Adevărul*, December 16, 2004, http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/elie-wiesel-trimite-pachet-steaua-romaniei-ion-iliescu-1_5oad2d2a7c42d5a66390283a/index.html.

memory even for Iliescu, the man who had turned it willy-nilly into official policy.

An important role in this event was played by historian Ioan Scurtu, at that time a presidential advisor. In my capacity of member of the Commission, I can testify that all along Scurtu acted as chief defender of Iliescu's positions and (far more important) that his presence on that body was due to the refusal by all members of the Romanian Academy to be involved in the act. That should tell something about the Romanian Academy's relevant Section of History and Archeology headed by Dan Berindei, which has been, and remains, a bastion of nationalist tradition (see *infra*). Scurtu had authored jointly with Buzatu in 1999 a *History of Romanians in the 20th Century*. The authors complemented one another quite well, although Scurtu is more careful in choosing his words. He does not miss any opportunity to depict Romania as a victim of the Great Powers, the Jews, or both. From Buzatu one learns, among other things, that Holocaust denier David Irving is an "international scientific authority in his field."⁸⁸

From among historian members of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, the bluntest and most clear-cut reaction to the legislation prohibiting Holocaust denial came from veteran Dan Berindei. Berindei, who headed the History and Archeology section, said that Romania needed no such legislation because "there has been no Holocaust in Romania. There have been some deportations to Transnistria, [Romania] was a anteroom of the Holocaust, but not [the place of the] Holocaust."⁸⁹ Or, as he would put it at a public debate held at the seat of the Romanian Academy, the country had only been "a wing of a phenomenon that touched Romania as well."⁹⁰

One decade and something on, again at the seat of the Academy, a nearly nonagenarian Associate Professor of Romanian origins from Germany embraced the same argument on the occasion of the presentation of an encyclopedia edited by the Academy-affiliated National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism. In the eyes of Professor Vladimir Iliescu, the claim that Romania had participated in the Ho-

88 Buzatu, "Lovitura de stat din august 1944," 455.

89 *Jurnalul național*, May 8, 2002.

90 *Rompres*, June 28, 2002.

locust was nothing short of “besmirching”; in fact it amounted to “a cosmic lie.” Some anti-Jewish “persecutions” had been registered, between (at most) 100,000–120,000 had been murdered, yet no extermination in gas chambers had taken place. There was a huge difference between Germany (and Hungary, which sent its Jews to Auschwitz) and Romania, where the rest of Jews were said to have led “quite a normal life.”⁹¹ Obviously, Professor Iliescu was way behind with his definition of the Holocaust, not to mention knowing something about the “Holocaust by bullets.”⁹² In the wake of his statement, the Aachen Technical University Rhein-Westfalen announced that it was interrupting collaboration with him. The Romanian members of the Academy, on the other hand, did not protest his statement. On the contrary, there was stormy applause. After protests by the Elie Wiesel Institute and the CMCA, a spokesperson for the Academy said the speaker did not represent the Academy’s official position, being just his personal opinion ventured in the course of an “academic debate.”⁹³ But those “personal opinions” are shared (tacitly at least) by quite a few members of the prestigious forum. Presenting his “personal” opinion, Vladimir Iliescu said—it was intended as an irony—that alongside Academy member and former Minister of Cults and Culture Răzvan Theodorescu he might consider setting up “The Club of Philosemite anti-Semites.” Indeed. Posing as a friend of Israel (he was also chairman of the Romania-Israel-Friendship Association) Theodorescu is on record as having said in June 2002 that “Romania has had no ties with the Holocaust but, through the occupation of the lands beyond [River] Prut, it participated in the Holocaust.”⁹⁴ In other words, Romanian troops were merely present where the Germans perpetrated it. In fact, the entire volume IX of *History of Romanians* edited by Academy member

91 A good summary (though not necessarily always an accurate interpretation) is to be found in the two-page article by Professor Armin Heinen (Heinen, “Cuvinte, destinatari ipotetici și reali”). Heinen writes that Professor Iliescu is “neither an antisemite, nor a negationist.” Having personally met him many years ago, I can vouch that the first statement is accurate. The second, however, is not. Iliescu is both a “deflective” and a “selective” negationist (see *infra*).

92 For instance, see the definition of the Holocaust by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>.

93 Drăgan, “Cum se neagă Holocaustul.”

94 Mediafax, June 28, 2002. For similar “wishy-washy” Theodorescu remarks, see Shafir, “Memory, Memorials and Membership,” 85, 87.

Dinu C. Giurescu and prefaced by Buzatu indulges into this type of “deflective negationism,” one variety of which can be called *deutsche, deutsche über alles*.⁹⁵ German historian Armin Heinen, summed up well what happened on the occasion: “The patriot formulated what the patriotic audience wanted to hear ... The reasons are probably cultural and go back to an older tradition of Romanian historiography ... [that] lacks narrative concepts beyond those of nineteenth century romantic historiography... Vladimir Iliescu addressed an audience sharing the same views—the views of communist regime survivors.”⁹⁶

In many cases, this operation is facilitated by the personal history of those engaged in it. I have in mind collaboration with the former communist secret police once “renationalized.” Take, for instance, the case of Berindei. The nonagenarian former head of the Academy’s History Section is known to have had a Legionary past.⁹⁷ According to historian Marius Oprea, none else than Nicolae Doicaru, who at that point was chief of Direction for Foreign Information (DIE), recruited Berindei as informer. Doicaru himself was a former Iron Guardist and was recruiting from among former members of that organization.⁹⁸

Similar to some extent is the case of Florin Constantiniu, a correspondent member of the Academy since 1999 and a titular member from 2006 until his death in 2012. Perhaps Romania’s postwar most gifted historian, who as a young boy, was attracted to the Iron Guard. By the time he became an adolescent, the times of the Guard were over and Romania was under communist rule. In the late 1950s he was expelled from the League of Working Youth (UTM, as that version of the Komsomol was then called) for “mysticism,” since (in Orthodox tradition) he used to make the sign of the cross each time he passed a church by.⁹⁹ One does not know how he managed to atone, but the end of the communist regime found him as PCR secretary at the Iorga Institute. Like Berindei, he had turned into a major battleship of

95 Germans, Germans above all. Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare*, 50–66.

96 Heinen, “Cuvinte, destinatari ipotetici și reali.”

97 One of his *Securitate* files mentioned his Iron Guard membership. See Oprea, *Banalitatea răului*, 410. See also Stan, *Istorie și politică*, 260, 271; Stan, *De veghe la scrierea Istoriei*, 170.

98 Marius Oprea cited in “Șeful istoricilor, fost legionar și colaborator al Securității,” *Evenimentul zilei*, August 4, 2003.

99 Constantiniu, *De la Răutu*, 197–201.

the Ceaușescu trusted “front of historians.” Meanwhile, it transpired that he was also a close associate of powerful presidential brother Ilie Ceaușescu,¹⁰⁰ with whom he shared a deep fear and resentment of Russia.¹⁰¹ The fact that Constantiniu was a nationalist was transparent for his readers, but until the 2008 publication of a book by historian Șerban Rădulescu Zoner, who researched the *Securitate* archives, no one knew that Constantiniu had also acted as an informer on his colleagues, under the code name “Chris.”¹⁰² When confronted with the evidence, Constantiniu denied having been an informer but admitted that, as RCP secretary, he was obliged to pass on information to *Securitate* officers in charge of the Iorga Institute.¹⁰³

Being a typical product of national communism (including local historiography’s romantic tradition mentioned by Heinen), after 1989 Constantiniu never managed to overcome his roots, despite some attempts. In his *A Sincere History of the Romanian People* (1997) he comes nearest to producing an estimate of Jewish Holocaust victims (200,000)¹⁰⁴ that is closest to the Elie Wiesel Commission’s Final Report. Unlike many of his fellow historians and members of the Academy (e.g., Dinu C. Giurescu), he does not indulge in producing statistics that take into account only Romanian Jews, leaving out Ukrainian or Russian Jewish victims in the Romania-administered Transnistria and in Ukraine proper. In the eyes of the latter author, Antonescu’s rule had been of the “paternalist traditionalist” type, with “strong nationalistic accents, safeguarding private property, as well as the mechanisms of a market economy, as much as those mechanisms could function in those years.” The “repressive apparatus functioned at a very moderate level, if one takes into consideration

100 Stan ventures the opinion that the Ilie Ceaușescu-Constantiniu association benefitted both. On one hand, the “learned historian” conferred “respectability” on the Institute headed by the presidential brother and, on the other hand, it satisfied the “versatile” historian “gnawed by ambitions.” Stan, *De veghe la scrierea Istoriei*, 95.

101 “We won’t be that lucky,” Ilie Ceaușescu said upon learning from Constantiniu about H  lene Carr  re d’Encausse’s prediction in the book *The End of the Soviet Empire* (Constantiniu, *De la R  utu*, 13).

102 Zoner, *Securitatea   n Institutul de Istorie “Nicolae Iorga.”* See also: Stan, *Istorie   i politic  *, 372–73; Stan, *De veghe la scrierea Istoriei*, 135, 166. A document signed “Chris” appears also in Oprea, *Banalitatea r  ului*, 409–10, without the identification of the source.

103 Oprea, “Academicianul Florin Constantiniu, informator al Securit  ţii?”

104 Constantiniu, *O istorie sincer  *, 394.

wartime conditions.” Giurescu admits, however, that there was “a single major exception: the anti-Semitic policy and the treatment imposed on the Jews from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, out of whom over 108,000 died or were killed in Transnistria.” Nevertheless, he writes, Antonescu “has the merit of having saved from the final solution the life of over 300,000 Romanian Jews.”¹⁰⁵

In late 2013 it turned out that Giurescu also acted as a somewhat controversial *Securitate* informer (code names “Neculce” and “Darius”) while working for the Romanian Foreign Ministry (in the late 1950s), after he asked for political asylum in the United States (in the 1980s). Although he apparently refused to provide information on his colleagues,¹⁰⁶ citing his reason as his own father’s persecutions in the early years of the regime,¹⁰⁷ he agreed to do it abroad, where he sought the aura of an anti-Ceaușescu dissident. Among those he reported on was Romanian-born U.S. historian Stephen Fischer-Galati. In 2014 Giurescu replaced Berindei as the Academy’s vice-chair.

The best response to Giurescu came from historian Lucian Boia: “The Antonescu regime exterminated just over 100,000 Romanian Jews and ‘saved’ some 300,000. Strictly arithmetical, the merit would be three times higher than the guilt. Were it not for the fact that there is no merit in not killing and it is criminal to do so.” But right after making this remark, Boia steps straight into the pitfall of Holocaust trivialization. Antonescu, he writes, must be seen in the context of his

¹⁰⁵ Giurescu, *România în al doilea război mondial*, 70, 91. He puts the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust at 108,710.

¹⁰⁶ For the decision of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (CNSAS) not to launch action against Giurescu, see “Dinu Giurescu și Securitatea”; see also Sidonia, “Cum a Ajuns Giurescu Sursa ‘Darius’”; Tudoran, “Darius Al Lui Istaspe vs. ‘Darius’ Al Lui ‘Secu (plus Rectificare)’”; In defense of Giurescu, see Oprea, “Dinu C. Giurescu, un academician în fața prostiei.” Tudoran’s response: Tudoran, “Scrisoare întredeschisă Adresată Prietenului Marius Oprea”; Tudoran, “Răspuns adresat dlui Marius Oprea.” The Romanian law requires revealing the identity of those who acted as “political police” and those who provided to that police information infringing on the human rights of those affected. On these grounds, the CNSAS deemed that Giurescu cannot be considered to have been an informer in the spirit of the legislation.

¹⁰⁷ Dinu Giurescu’s father, historian Constantin C. Giurescu, had served in King Carol II government of the National Renaissance Front between 1939–40 and was imprisoned by the communist regime in 1950. He spent five years and two months as a political prisoner in the infamous Sighet jail. See Giurescu, *Cinci ani și două luni în penitenciarul de la Sighet*.

times, an epoch “dominated by discrimination, hate and violence. *Neither Dresden nor Hiroshima were noble acts (not mentioning Hitler and Stalin’s millions of victims.*” He (rightly) adds: “the Romanians perceive [the figure of] Antonescu differently than the Jews.” But he walks the Holocaust obfuscation’s thin rope when remarking: “The marshal led the war for Romania’s re-unification and fell victim to Communism.”¹⁰⁸ Be that as it may, in a later book Boia dedicated just two pages to a chapter on the Holocaust in Romania, posed under a question mark that never gets an unequivocal answer.¹⁰⁹ Constantiniu, Giurescu, and even Boia seem incapable of overcoming the exculpation syndrome and the former intertwines that incapacity with the Ceaușescu legacy of resentment of “interference in internal affairs.”

Like Giurescu, Constantiniu insists that Antonescu was not a “fascist dictator” arguing, as many (e.g., Fătu) did in the 1970s and the 1980s, that “the absence of the single party from the start does away” with such depiction. His rule is said to have been “dictatorial” and “inspired by the traditional themes of autochthonous nationalism.” However, “Antonescu’s dictatorship never matched the aberrant forms of repression encountered in the Soviet Union or the third Reich.”¹¹⁰ Constantiniu would bitterly complain in 2007, in what was a thinly veiled criticism of Israeli and U.S. presence on the Wiesel Commission and its recommendations, peppered with a dose of allusive anti-Semitism.

The debates on Marshal Antonescu’s activity cannot take place in freedom because the decision makers worry that they irk their “friends” from abroad. The Romanian people and it alone decides whether Ion Antonescu is a hero or a traitor; the Romanian people and it alone decides whether it wants or not monuments to be erected for him, and it alone decides what should be written in [school] manuals about Ion Antonescu. What [might the reaction be] if the Romanian people were

108 Boia, *România: Țară de frontieră a Europei*, 194. Emphasis added.

109 Boia, “Un echivoc românesc.” For the sake of fairness it must, however, be added that this thin volume repeatedly mentions the antisemitic background of the Holocaust. Moreover, the author was the first Romanian historian to have undertaken in *Istorie și mit* a serious deconstruction of the myths of both the Iron Guard and the Antonescu regime’s stereotypes about the Jews.

110 Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră*, 394, 395.

to claim, as others do, the right to evaluate [historic] personalities by the yardstick of their behavior toward Romanians?¹¹¹

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

Romania's post-communist wars of memory are waged by heterogeneous armies and on several fronts. Historians are just one regiment, and not even that regiment is homogenous. It includes genuine democrats who suffered under the former regime, national communists, and former *Securitate* informers marked by their past. Undoubtedly, among the regiment's ranks some are driven by that Romanian intellectual trait depicted by Boia in one of his books as opportunism manifested in the availability to serve the powers-that-be and serenely change political colors.¹¹² What makes them serve under the same banner is a master commemorative narrative (Romania as victim), enforced by a cultural trauma (Sovietization, communization) and represented by collective agents (the community of historians) who engage in a circular exercise of guilt externalization (the grammar of exculpation) resulting in competitive martyrdom in order to reinforce the main narrative. Other regiments, just as heterogeneous (e.g., the *literati*) also contribute to an effort that aims at countering the Jewish memory of the Holocaust with the counter-memory of the Gulag, as I have shown elsewhere. Films and documentaries that pass over in silence the Radical Right past of the new "hero models" are produced.¹¹³ For some time, a campaign has been underway to canonize members of the Iron Guard who died in communist prisons. The neo-Legionaries often conduct ceremonies enacting commemorative rituals in the presence of the Guard's veterans. According to Boia,

It is entirely possible for some underlining marks placed under the interwar period, the Antonescu regime or the Communist regime to be somewhat different than the Jewish perspective. Jews have an entire-

¹¹¹ Constantiniu, *De la Răutu*, 131.

¹¹² Boia, *Capcanele istoriei*. For an earlier analysis of the same trait in Romanian intellectuals, see Shafir, "Political Culture."

¹¹³ Shafir, "Istorie, memorie și mit," 333–38.

ly justified sensibility vis-à-vis the extreme Right; similarly, Romanians display susceptibility vis-à-vis Communism. The West, which suffered under Nazism and different fascisms, cannot comprehend this very well; for Romanians, the great drama has been Communism; on this point, their pain is different from that of the Jews. It would, however, be an exaggeration if some different accents—belonging to the realm of free intellectual discussion—were to be labelled as “anti-Semitism.”¹¹⁴

I would subscribe to everything in this paragraph but the last line. The Hungarian Jobbik example is just one reason. The main cause, however, is that Boia’s memory and mine are different.

¹¹⁴ Boia, *România*, 195.

CHAPTER

4

Reflections on the Principles of the Critical Culture of Memory

Todor Kuljić

INTRODUCTION

The center stage of this chapter is a presentation of the basic elements of the hegemonic ethnocentric culture of memory in Serbia and broader region. In trying to present the process of normalized nationalism, victimization of one's own nation, and the war of memories the author focuses on three related and closely inter-dependent principles of alternative, critical culture of memory: (1) demonumentalization of the past, (2) functional traumatization of the past, and (3) historical comparison of crimes. The lack of dealing with one's own nationalism—as opposed to the other's—is identified as the main problem in the region. Therefore, a distinction must be made between critical and blind patriotism. According to the latter, my nation is always right. It is its imperative to not only hate another nation but also the part of my own that does not hate others. Here, the hegemonic, heroic narratives, and symbolical structures center on the semantics of national sadness rather than on class misery or general human suffering. Every nationalism morphs imperceptibly through blind patriotism into chauvinism and fascism. Therefore, the position that my nation is always the victim should be replaced by the position that we are all victims. It is not the duty of critical history to erase one's own national past but to critically forget its false glory.

DEMONUMENTALIZATION OF THE PAST

While the European Union has been issuing resolutions to harmonize the pasts of its member states, the Western Balkans has been experiencing an on-going civil war of memories. Through national holidays, history textbooks, and various commemorations, the ruling elites of the new states have strengthened their sovereignty, stressed their losses and others' wrongs, and made calculated moves to stir up new conflicting emotions. The new memory design depends not so much on the real experience as on the interests of those in power. Every memory of victims reopens old wounds and creates new conflicts, whereas the new use and abuse of the past has also opened the question of whether the conflicted past should be suppressed or continuously maintained alive. Is there such a thing as enlightened memory? Who claims to be the victim, who is recognized as the victim and who is stigmatized as the new executioner? What is the relationship between spontaneous forgetting and calculated falsification of the past? When addressing these questions, we must first present some existing structures of the regional as well as Serbian culture of memory, and then set forth a proposal to mitigate its conflict potential.

What may serve as the starting point for further consideration is the position that overcoming the past is not a process that necessarily leads to reconciliation between crimes and forgiveness, but a process of learning how to live with the awareness that crimes are also part of our history and of our collective identity, and that there is nothing that could help us accept this reality. Therefore, rather than a final one, overcoming the past is a continuous process; a constant reminder rather than a past that has been dealt with fully. For this reason, the said process is always inevitably incomplete, with distortions of the past functioning as the defensive blocks of both collective and individual interests. To demystify these, it is necessary to accept the shadows of the past as an integral part of the national identity and suppress any resistance to the acknowledgment that even the representatives of my own nation could have committed the most atrocious crimes. All things considered, discussing the dark side of one's own national past is crucial not only because the past has yet to be overcome, or because

of the still lingering residues of revenge, but, above all, because of the pressing need to consider both the bright and dark sides of the past as integral parts of the national identity. In other words, if the inglorious past does not want to pass, it does not have to.

As a rule, the unwanted past is easy to forget. Deliberate forgetting actively shapes spontaneous selective memory to a degree too subtle to be detected by a superficial observer. When, however, a tragic past has such a strong emotional impact on us that we are able neither to forget it nor to integrate it into the symbolical order of the on-going present, then we begin to suppress it. In case of wars, pogroms, and persecutions, this may even render us incapable of conceiving past events as the building blocks of our present. In such instances we talk about a trauma, that is, a gap between the experience and our ability to confront it. Distinction should therefore be made between: (1) deep irreversible forgetting—erasing the traces or forgetting the basic and original meaning, and (2) selective forgetting, which only leaves out details and thus allows us to create a different story. History neither evaluates nor preserves every trace of evidence the same way. The memory of forgetting—the critique of every historiography will inevitably detect official attempts to remove the traces of the unwanted past. Public apology, for instance, is a form of active forgetting as opposed to passive forgetting. Rather than serving as a mere admission of a mistake, apology lends a nuance of grace to the painstaking effort of remembrance.¹ This act does not ignore a past event or a crime but its character and place in the entire historical consciousness. Amnesty, too, is a form of forgetting, very similar to the royal privilege of mercy. It is granted by political rather than judicial power. Although the aforementioned types of forgetting can have an assuaging effect, they do not suffice. To the contrary, they can also be harmful. Is forgetting national crimes a remedy or should the latter remain an open wound in the memory? What should be remembered and what forgotten?

Recognizing the danger of an enslaving past, even Nietzsche pointed to the need for the constructive forgetting of conservative and monumental roles of the past (Nietzsche 2001). And before him, Goethe

1 Ricoeur, *Das Rätsel der Vergangenheit*, 145–46.

argued that appreciation is the true form of liberality. Needless to say, there is no enlightened culture of memory without confronting the shadows of the past. However, since this is not a priority of the ethnocentric culture of memory, we have the least reason to be concerned with it, as the main elements of ethnocentrism are asymmetrical evaluation, teleological continuity, and centralized perspective. The German historian Jörn Rüsen has every reason to urge that asymmetrical evaluation be replaced with normative equality, teleological continuity with reconstructive concepts of development that emphasize contingency and discontinuity, and centralized perspective with multi-perspectivity and polycentric approaches to historical experience. A decentralized past can significantly ease the way toward a universal history that stems from the unity of the human species.² In other words, it should contribute to the construction of a new culture of recognition in the twenty-first century, since even globalization seeks to redefine ethnocentrically understood differences among nations and cultures. Critical history is crucial in reducing the conflict potential of the past, whereas rigorous monumentalization and antiquation of the past are harmful memory patterns.

The task of critical history is, of course, not to erase one's own past but to critically forget its false glory. However, tolerance cannot be attained without mutual demonumentalization of conflicting pasts in the region. Today, it is hard to lift the veil from the glorious liberations, as the unparalleled war glory is embedded into many identities. But it is important to try. How? By gradually incorporating dark sides into the glorious stories about one's own group. Only when people start to perceive their own national past ambivalently do they become able to mutually recognize each other. Therefore, emphasis should be on dialectical tensions and discontinuities in historical experience rather than on predestined monumental and sacrificial verticals. Only through such effort can the past overcome its fatalistic character, history become more open to alternatives, and a peaceful interpretation of the past and the future become more likely. In other words, an alternative to the ethnocentric dogma is a non-uniform, polycentric and

2 Rüsen, "How to Overcome Ethnocentrism," 118.

multi-perspective history.³ Just as the Germans have not forgotten Goethe on one hand and Auschwitz on the other, the Serbs must maintain the memory of both the liberation struggles and Srebrenica, and the Croats should not peremptorily separate “Operation Storm” from Jasenovac.

This does not imply that a critical attitude toward the past is now less about the search for the truth and consequently for the reconciliation between various we-groups. Nonetheless, efforts should first be made toward recognition and respect for all those outside our group. Mutual critical adjustment is a premise of a new culture of memory. We can make space and search for a new future only by suppressing the influence of romantic historiography and various history peddlers who “protect” us from the “destructive” forgetting of our former enemies.

Accordingly, we should first change our attitude toward the war of memories. There are striking differences in how the wars in the Balkans are perceived within and outside the region. Foreigners perceive them differently than we do. Had it not taught us a lesson, this difference would have been trivial. Maria Todorova’s school has probably provided the most systematic explication of the negative stereotypes about the Balkans in the West. Balkan conflicts are chaos, disorder, the rock bottom, the black hole of Europe, with the Balkans perceived as a non-state space created on the margins of an empire with the conspiratorial, military frontier, border guard mentality. Today, Balkanization is the antithesis of “Scandinavization.” For the most part, because of the wars.

In contrast to the aforementioned negative stereotypes held by foreigners about the wars in the Balkans, we mostly interpret our own wars through positive stereotypes. Wars are sublime moments of liberation, and everything conquered is considered liberated. The domestic culture of memory is developed within the liberationist political culture, which in its foundation draws on the claims to unrestricted authority on the ground of recognized merits in the liberation efforts, emphasis of the moral priority of partisan struggle, danger of praetori-

3 Ibid., 126.

an military coup, and brutal conversions. Freedom is always above democracy. Textbooks contain extensive chapters on wars, which systematically and considerably downplay the complexity of events, while paying little attention to periods of peace (especially the most recent, nearly half a century long period of peace in socialism).

It is not difficult to see that the self-victimizing interpretation of war is central to every normalized nationalism. Interpretations in which one's own nation is always the victim are dominated by blind rather than critical patriotism. What strikes the eye is that this is precisely the context of contemporary debates on wars in the region (from Slovenian to Kosovar revisionists). Thus, one may witness the attempts to monumentalize the "Ten-Day War" heroes in Slovenia and the "Homeland War" heroes in Croatia, the Serbs are the victims of the Great Powers, and the Albanians are the victims of the Serbs. A comparative analysis of the ways in which historiographies of the new Balkan states try to render the war meaningful reveals a strong similarity between the key patterns, with predominant myths including *ante murale* myths (describing one's own nation as the bulwark of civilization) and myths of the nation as the victim. The socialist Yugoslavia is universally and more or less explicitly perceived as an entity that suppressed the national soul or at least as a totalitarian phase. In Croatia, the new democratic vertical of the national past runs from Stjepan Radić through Vlado Maček to Franjo Tuđman. In a similar way, socialism is being officially erased from the authentic ethnocentric past of other nations, thus shortening the history. It is important to note that self-victimization is more persuasive when the past centers on wars rather than periods of peaceful progress. Although wars are the turning points in development, they are primarily treated by historiography as prominent symbols of meaning and especially of national liberation. Accentuating wars rather than periods of peace is the fundamental mechanism of downplaying the complexity of the chaotic Balkan past and forming the basis of periodization (prewar, postwar, and interwar). Moreover, war is a symbol of a glorious and monumental past (which is only rendered possible through suffering). And finally, in war, the space of memory is much more easily divided into public friends and enemies than in times of peace.

The war of the 1990s has its place in the Serbian culture of memory alongside earlier wars—only that this particular war is seen as the biggest defeat of the Serbs since the Battle of Kosovo. There exist several versions of this interpretation: (a) “war hawks” still complain that the tactics were wrong (indecisive, start-stop, Zagreb should have been taken); (b) ethnic “patriots” claim that the war was lost because of the equally disastrous strategy; rather than safeguarding Yugoslavia, the focus should have been on Serbia. Moreover, Serbia was also diplomatically unprepared for the war; and (c) “proud patriots” maintain that the nation suffered not only defeat but humiliation as well. Srebrenica was, first and foremost, a national shame. In all three versions of interpretation, the victim is the nation itself. According to the first one, the Serbs are the victims because the war has been lost; according to the second one, because the war had not been fought right; and according to the third one, the nation is the victim because it has been shamed. Thus, Srebrenica is, first and foremost, seen as a Serbian shame and only then as guilt; the tragedy of Srebrenica is in Serbia’s shame rather than in Bosniak losses. Srebrenica is an incident, an excess, but not genocide stemming from the enraged national being; in other words, it is an uncalled-for stain on the glorious national past.

In Croatia, war-centric memory is the most evident, with the Homeland War—the canonized, supreme source of sovereignty and the Magna Carta of Croatian independence—at its core. This was the most glorious war, with Operation Storm at its pinnacle, serving as a rampart in present-day Croatia, protecting the identity and the past of the group who perceives itself as *croato vero*. The said war, moreover, constitutes the paramount identity and the bulwark against Yugoslav communism. In this respect, Zagreb resembles Priština, where national liberation is equally untouchable and most often canonized. There, war heroes are sacrosanct. In Serbia, however, one does not witness the same unconstructive pressure of liberators, but rather a return to the glory of the former monarchy. Contemporary Serbia does not draw any comfort from the Christian belief that suffering leads to salvation, nor has the Serbian spirit grown any stronger because it has been deprived of triumph. Zagreb, Priština, and Belgrade have very different breed-

ing grounds for self-doubt. When facing the past, embellished triumph is always a bad ally.

In order to problematize this type of memory, it is first necessary to demonumentalize the war. But how can this be done, when the mythicized glorious war past permeates the ideational formations and the collective consciousness of the region? From political culture to school reading. The liberationist culture of memory is woven deeply into the cultural fabric of the region, from art to history studies. The easiest thing to do would be to say in a defeatist tone that it is impossible to destroy values that have for centuries been shaped through the liberationist and border guard consciousness of the small Balkan nations. It is not enough to repeat that every war is a failure of politics, and it is of even less use to moralistically dismiss war as something shameful. The culture of memory should apply more self-criticism in removing the mythical elements from the collective memory and including more daring new contents to: (1) acknowledge the responsibility of one's own nation in past wars, (2) shed light on the crimes committed in the name of liberating one's own nation, (3) depict the rival group in a positive light, and (4) search the past to find periods of peaceful multi-national coexistence and present them as important places of memory for coexistence in the future.

Attesting to the fact that such efforts remain utopian is the practice of public monuments. Public memorial space is an arena, a strategically controlled field of activity. Public monuments are not the sites of spontaneous mourning but indicators of victory in the battle between the conflicting pasts. They cannot be understood through the hermeneutics of tears but through the critique of ideology. Namely, new public monuments in the region show which groups are able to inscribe themselves into public space and how they are ranked in the hierarchy of spatial memory. Moreover, monuments are identities created by the survivors. Through dead bodies as heavy symbols, the ruling impose meaning upon the ruled. Universally, the meaning of individual lives is linked through public monuments to the interests of the ruling classes and groups. Today, due to the weakened left as well as the absence of its alternative, there is no visible commemoration of class pathos or the suffering of the Other. It is no coincidence that symbolic battles

over memory continue persistently with the process of erecting national monuments.⁴ The usurpations of graves and corpses as the symbolic capital are diverse and imaginative. Public graves still constitute a substantial political capital; a repository of continuity—and also of revenge. It is not without reason that the Croatian state demolished the greatest number of socialist monuments in the region.⁵ The fear of the reconstruction of Yugoslavia dictated not only the erection of new national monuments but also the demolition of former multi-ethnic ones. Parades of corpses (*dead-body politics*), their reburial and the dismantling of multi-ethnic statues are also indicative of deeper restorative value shifts. Universally, religion and nationalism are restored through the dead.

All nationalists remember the wounds of their own nation, but rare internationalists point to the fact that everyone is a victim. Sensitive to the divided memory, the new Balkan states defend themselves with the use of homogeneous national counter-memory. In reality, however, the memories of the victims are not only sharply divided but also conflicted. Divided memory should be distinguished from contested memory. It may coexist, like various religious holidays. On the other hand, contested or conflicted memory is moralized, emotionalized, and action-oriented. Devoid of empathy, this activist memory fevers the destruction of monuments of the Others. The visitors of national monuments find whatever they have brought with them in the first place (piety, respect, identification with the victims, and readiness to take revenge). The civil war did not require ordinary, but heavy emotive symbols to construct groups of collective victims. There are no monuments to the defeated enemy or to those who were killed by the hand of the criminals from their own group. The exceptions are the streets named after Srđan Aleksić (in Sarajevo, Novi Sad, and Pančevo), a Serb killed in Trebinje in 1993, after he resisted a group of his fellow countrymen in order to save a Bosniak, A. Glavović. Memory activists often build “self-evident” memory communities seeking revenge. Every nationalism is defined by the glorious past. Every ethnocentrism in

4 Karačić, Banjeglav and Govedarica, *Revizija prošlosti*.

5 Banjeglav, “Sjećanje na rat ili rat sjećanja,” 100.

the absence of an alternative is a horizon of meaning obsessing over what they want to take from us.

In the war in Yugoslavia, too, patriotization of the dead was the blood charisma of the war morals on all sides, and national monuments serve as integrative and distinctive sites of memory—exceptionally dramatized rather than cold, of course. Quite often, it was about imaginary suffering of one's own group in the distant past and a fabricated massacre in the recent past. The link between the bright past and the desired future is abundantly dramatized with the bloodshed and graves of one's own group. The politicization of death always takes the form of converting aggression into defense, that is, of killing those who are intent on killing. Commemorations celebrate the deaths of the defenders. They dramatize not only the loss of their compatriots' lives but also the suffering and the pledge of the fallen. Hence, death represents not only physical killing but a metaphor for the destruction of the collective—the death of religion, the oppression of the church, killing the national soul, shedding the nation's blood. The memory of the fallen heroes and martyrs should not merely provide a moral catharsis, but give prominence to values and meaning, as well as the indestructibility of ideology and religion. This can be achieved through the ritual formation of political sacrifice. In every ideology, death is an investment in a new life of the group. The dead deliver their blood to the life flow of the collective. Rather than fade away, the sacrifice remains fixed in the memory. At the same time, it is spontaneously polarizing, praising the ones who suffer, as well as seeking various forms of compensation and punishment for the perpetrators. Death symbols are the easiest way to “weave” dramatization into political moralism, as they represent the most evident witnesses to morally superior objectives of the immortal group. Moreover, the suffering and dying of the victims provide the ultimate cover for retaliation. Indeed, although forgiveness sometimes seems to be offered for bloodshed instead of vengeance, it usually merely serves as a political tool for deferring revenge. Not only the unavenged, the forgiven blood may be politically activated as well. Even though Jasenovac and Bleiburg have not been in operation for almost half a century, they may be quickly reactivated under the new circumstances. And Srebrenica, too, has been smouldering despite verbal

forgiveness. What is more, revenge is sometimes morally superior to forgiveness, by exacting some kind of justice rather than being passive. There is no such thing as pacifist chauvinism. To the contrary, chauvinists measure patriotism by the willingness to seek active revenge.

Has the passage of time nevertheless changed the culture of memory? Not really, given that nationalisms in the region have shown no signs of slackening. They still continue to be active in all the newly created Balkan states, among the intellectuals and hooligans alike. And yet, there are new nuances in memory, detectable in the differences between the memory of the winners and the memory of the defeated from the 1990s: between Zagreb and Priština on one hand and Belgrade on the other. On one hand, there is the undeterred and systematically maintained Croatian and Albanian charismatization of the liberation from Yugoslavia and Serbia, and on the other, there is the mild Serbian defeatism. Whereas one side glorifies the ultimate liberation and its own heroes, the other one seeks the same in the distant past or the monarchy. Both sides use their own shrines to prevent a political debacle.

There will be no change as long as Operation Storm continues to serve as a metaphor for freedom instead of persecution, and as long as Srebrenica continues to serve as a symbol of shame rather than guilt. But, still, has something changed after all? Aleksandar Vučić and Ante Kotromanović, opposing extremists in the civil war twenty years ago, and current defense ministers of Serbia and Croatia, respectively, have been discussing military cooperation. The president of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, a former Chetnik leader, has apologized for the Serbian crimes. Both appearances took place at about the same time, at the end of April 2013. Nevertheless, the relationship between the healing forgetting of the war and not forgetting the dead and the persecuted has remained unchanged. Are the aforementioned politicians ready for a change and healing process of forgetting, or are they following the orders from Brussels? These are not just men who once stood behind the Chetnik and Ustasha threats; they are the metaphors of impromptu Serbian and Croatian politics and rejected ideological and political conversion. As young storm troopers, they did whatever they wanted, but now as politicians, they do as they are told. Vučić,

Kotromanović, and Nikolić caused quite a stir, as the same *salto mortale* had already been made by Vuk Drašković and Stipe Mesić. Nevertheless, this is a positive shift, even though the worm of doubt still gnaws: can those who have been saying one thing for twenty years, now do something completely different? How can we believe that a formerly frantic adherent of Šešelj and a militant Croatian warrior will pledge peaceful cooperation? The reservation remains, even if we evade the question whether a politician has the right to conscience. What is clear, however, is that even in 2013, the past has been merely suppressed rather than put to rest. Can the conflicting pasts coexist with a similar vision of a European future? Hardly in the long run, but not much can be done in terms of short-term politics, either. Mutual trust in the region can only be restored through a reciprocal and systematic criticism of one's own chauvinism. But the latter goal remains unattainable even in 2013, because there was no mutual trust in 1993 to begin with. Does this make the question of how to remember the crimes without using them for new revenge any less relevant today? The politicians are saying something else. They are saying something like: "You claim to be the victims, we claim to be the victims, fine, let us all apologise to each other and leave the past behind."

This, however, is a short-term solution. The fact that the said ministers admitted in Zagreb in 2013 that they do not agree on the past, and that they will cooperate, is not the answer. To the contrary, they continuously stir discordance in the region with regard to the recent past, not allowing the past to be swept under the rug, either for the sake of maintaining their authority or because they are following the directives from Brussels. The conflicting pasts can only be disarmed when each nation confronts its own crimes systematically, not merely through a series of protocols. What is more, the classical martyrological question should be reformulated. We should ask ourselves whether we are all innocent executioners or whether we are all responsible victims. These complex issues should be approached with self-criticism, which is the basis of moral superiority.

Instead, the heroic narratives and symbolic structures centered on the semantics of grief and the loss of a compatriot became the dominant framework of interpretation with the nation as a paramount he-

gemonic sieve. When it comes down to the memory of the latest war, we will in vain seek national purgatory or a self-reflexive cathartic memory. There is no culture of acknowledgment or the more influential inter-ethnic memory. Memory is narrowed down to the national reservoir raised onto the national Pantheon. There is no negative memory (of what we have done to others), because nationalisms feed on “what others have done to us.” Only what does not stop hurting, remains in the memory (Nietzsche), with victims determining its scope. Here, the line between real and fabricated victims is fluid. How is it then possible to suppress a culture of memory in which everything is ethnicized and cantered on the decreed national pain and the charisma of national blood?

FUNCTIONAL TRAUMATIZATION OF THE PAST

Trauma is probably the most painful memory. It is the destruction of the memory of historical experience and historical consciousness,⁶ something that cannot be explained through the present experience or the current system of interpretation. It is the Holocaust for the Germans, Jasenovac for the Croats, and Srebrenica for the Serbs. Only when an unparalleled experience of crime has been considered (but not rendered meaningful) can trauma become a constructive and deliberate process. Germany’s dealing with the past is marked by its military defeat, as it has confronted Nazism also under external pressure. It is important to note that only when historical thinking opens a traumatic segment of experience and confronts it can a trauma become a constructive process by incorporating the past into the future. “Never again” becomes the imperative of memory, rather than a mere lesson from the past. Clearly, a trauma cannot become part of the future through the glorious past in which conquered has always been considered liberated and where one’s own crimes have always been interpreted as a necessary reprisal. For instance, the Holocaust Memorial to the victims of Nazism in the center of Berlin is a paradigm of the past in the service of the future, rather than the monumentalization of Ger-

6 Rösen, *Zerbrechende Zeit*, 147.

many's shame. In the Balkan region, however, every speech on the genocide perpetrated by "our people" is perceived by the national liberators as an intrusion into the glorious past, a "borderline experience" of history that cannot be incorporated into the bright national future.

On the other hand, the suffering of one's own nation in genocide is a traumatic memory as well, albeit of a different kind. This memory, too, cannot be included in the regular and controllable order of memory. Whereas Kosovo is already a traditionalized active trauma of the Serbian nation, Bleiburg and Vukovar have recently become of similar importance for Croatia and Srebrenica for the Bosniaks. How the trauma of each group is going to be cultivated depends on the new conditions. Contrary to this, a negative memory is a pattern of shaping social memory that slowly progresses through many antagonisms, departing from the fact that memories can only function in a humanistic and democratic way if they also incorporate memories of the history of lawlessness and crime for which we, too, are responsible or even to blame. Despite the obvious irruption of memory and a surge in research into it, the present-day region suffers from the absence of not only a moral, but also a continuous historical-didactical, educational, media-theoretical, museological, and aesthetical debate as the foundation for the creation of negative memory. This is due to the dominant conception of the incomparable losses of one's own nation. Viewing one side from an exclusively victimological perspective distorts the past just as much as strictly portraying the other side as the executioner. How is it possible to resist that? Or, in other words, how is it possible to convert a trauma into a useful reminder? First, it is necessary to see how a collective trauma can be neutralized. Some suggestions are offered below.

First, trauma is given its place in a chain of events. Since the constructed chain already bears meaning, the trauma, being one of the links, loses its power to destroy it. Jasenovac is interpreted in the recent Croatian history as a crime of Croatian traitors, the Ustasha "residue," and is as such eliminated from the existing structure, that is, continuous Croatian aspirations for an ethnically clean state. Once the trauma is given meaning and a historical place in the chain of events, it immediately becomes devoid of its traumatic character. Detraumatization is reducing a crime into an everyday occurrence to the point of triviality.

Drawing on Germany's experience of dealing with the past, Rüsen listed a few strategies of detraumatization that may also be identified in other areas:

- a. Anonymization: instead of providing a specific description of the killing as well as identifying the perpetrators and those responsible, one talks about "evil destiny," "dark forces," and "demons" in a more or less normal world.
- b. Categorization: the trauma is explained in abstract terms (as a tragedy, part of a historical current, a consequence of the war) to be more easily integrated into the already conceived flow of time and freed of its disturbing uniqueness (which destroys the meaning).
- c. Normalization: it is added that crimes have always been committed, that human nature has always been the same everywhere, that "evil" cannot be eradicated from human nature—which, likewise, dissolves the destructive quality of the traumatic event. The extreme version is the Bible saying "patient—saved" and the resigned comfort that we are all equal victims and that all victims are in heaven.
- d. Moralization: the destructive force of the trauma is domesticated. The traumatic event is turned into an event that must not repeat ever again. The trauma takes on a moral mission as a reminder.
- e. Aestheticization: the crime is turned into an image or a film and becomes merchandise. A similar form is musealization: crime scenes are converted into a lesson from history.
- f. Teleologization: the traumatic past is reconciled with the present by serving its purpose—that is, by becoming a lesson learned. There is consolation, the purpose of the trauma has been fulfilled by the lesson learned.⁷

As mentioned above, the traumatic experience in the Balkan region, too, boils down to two glaring absurdities: Jasenovac is an excess and Srebrenica a revenge gone too far. The way in which politics has been

7 Ibid., 172–74.

dealing with the past reveals mechanisms of trauma relief similar to those used in psychoanalysis. Criminals suppress their own responsibility, ex-territorialize it, and place it on others. On the other hand, historians use strategies of detraumatization as well: in the 1990s, Tuđman reduced the number of the victims of Jasenovac and Serbian revisionists have been describing Srebrenica as a war crime rather than genocide. National historiography is, in its essence, a practice of premeditated cultural detraumatization. Nationalists minimize crimes perpetrated by their own group to prevent the demonumentalization of its past.

Therefore, in light of what has been said, how can we resist detraumatization that makes sense of senseless crimes, relativizes and trivializes them, and gradually sends them to oblivion? Is it only through myths that Auschwitz, Jasenovac, and Srebrenica can be saved from historicizing that dissolves their traumatic quality? Certainly not, as in the mythical, irrational context, trauma endures and manifests itself in a separate space of meaning and in the absence of precise clarification. In other words, it is separated from its own authentic frame, just like the Holocaust has been separated by German revisionists from German capitalism, nationalism, and exploitation of forced labor at concentration camps. Crimes are not an incomprehensible outburst of the irrational, but rather the extreme manifestation of a deeper structural current. In what sense? The Holocaust is an integral part of German racist capitalism, Jasenovac is the fascist peak of Croatian separatist chauvinism, and Srebrenica is the genocidal pinnacle of Serbian assimilatory chauvinism.

Clearly, it is far from easy to admit that a crime is a structure rather than a mere excess. But no matter how tempted we may be, we should not evade this task. We must endeavour to understand, through empathy, the circumstances in which others portray the past. This does not imply searching less for the truth and consequently for the reconciliation between various we-groups. We must first make efforts to recognize and respect all those outside our group. The premise of the new culture of memory is mutual critical adjustment. Pluralization of memory implies destroying the monopoly of memory as the central pillar of cultural communities and authoritative centers that impose decreed pasts. We can make space for a free search in the future only

by suppressing the influence of romantic historiography and various history peddlers who “protect” us from the “destructive” forgetting of our former enemies.

This is by no means easy, since the underlying element of all nationalisms in the region is their reactive quality. They reinforce and feed on each other, with their monumentalization also being the result of mutual reinforcement and being attached to reactive martyrology and methodical traumatization (Bleiburg vs. Jasenovac, Kravice vs. Srebrenica, etc.). What strikes the eye is the symmetry of the latest justification of the “Homeland War”: the ethnic cleansing during Operation Storm was the result of the precedent ethnic cleansing in the SAO Krajina. What we keep forgetting is the asymmetry. Croatia has been cleansed of Serbs, but Serbia has not been cleansed of non-Serbs. Without going into numerous actual asymmetries on all sides, there is only one thing that should be mentioned at this point. For the spiral of mutually reinforcing exclusion to be at least somewhat reversed, more consistent deliberation should be given to the culture of recognition. However illusory it may be to expect that, in the near future, a politically useful ethnocentric trauma of one’s own losses could be triggered by a self-critical trauma of one’s own crime, this is nevertheless not the reason for the critical culture of memory to resign from the said principle. Someone should, in fact, make the first step, and although the first reaction from the opposite side might be malevolent and triumphalist, a similar, self-critical reaction should not be excluded either.

It is easily conceivable that the relationship toward the crimes of one’s own nation determines the level of nationalism quite accurately. The less self-criticism there is, the more normal nationalism becomes. The crimes of one’s own nation are discussed in different ways and every rhetoric bears witness to different measures of ethnocentrism: crime committed in war (people are killed in every war), war crime (a crime that needs to be punished, but also understood within the context of war where it goes unpunished), crime as a national shame (the victim is, first and foremost, my nation, because it has been shamed by crime), crime as a broad guilt of compatriots (responsibility lies with everyone who helped normalize nationalism), crime as a permanently

cultivated national trauma (a line cannot be drawn under the inerascable crime committed by one's own group).

What immediately catches the eye is that the last version is also the least common. Namely, instead of stressing national responsibility and nurturing national trauma, the hegemonic ideology in the region today is that which detraumatizes the crimes of one's own nation. Detraumatization is reducing a crime into an everyday occurrence to the point of triviality. What really took place in Srebrenica—a war crime, genocide, or liberation of Srebrenica as reiterated by Serbian nationalists? Is Srebrenica a national shame or guilt, or a self-evident and necessary revenge? Genocide is most often detraumatized by being interpreted as a necessary defence. Many disputes, in fact, arise from the disagreement on whether genocide is an inexplicable excess, an outburst of the irrational, incomprehensible discontinuity, or does it, perhaps, have its own laws? If it is incomprehensible, can genocide be considered at all? According to some, genocide, which destroys meaning, can only be expressed with silence, the sole possible manifestation of immeasurable suffering and the baffling motives to kill. However, silence leads to forgetting. And besides, it is easier to remain silent over a single incident rather than a structure. It may be most difficult to admit that, albeit bearing no sense at all, crimes are part of long-term ethnocentric structures rather than excesses. Needless to say, responsibility does not lie with structures but with those who have deliberately activated them.

Unlike what has been stated above, in the ethnocentric culture of memory, crimes are described as excesses and the blame for them is laid on criminals. In this way, they are methodically trivialized. How is it possible to confront the depersonalization of genocidal crimes, that is, the attempts to reduce them into a common war crime? We should fight against the relativization of crimes with shockingly bare facts. We should nurture the memory of “the normalcy of excess” and the banality of evil, which can always happen again, without describing crimes as incomprehensible and predestined. The historical narrative based on predestination (it was bound to happen to us) should be set against the historical narrative based on discontinuities (things could have been different).

However, such culture of memory continues to be of secondary importance. Most people still neutralize trauma, understating the crimes perpetrated by their own nation. Would it be possible to reverse this process, that is, maintain the trauma as an indelible reminder? To begin with, rather than detraumatize the national past, intellectuals should give consideration to its functional traumatization. It is not enough to merely mention the crimes of one's own nation, they must also be interpreted—not as peripheral but, rather, as structural segments of the past.

While the groups involved in a conflict are organized by the same patterns of hatred, they are often so blinded by it that they are unable to notice their propinquity. Nevertheless, they agree on the need to hate not only others but also those in their own ranks that do not hate enough. Here, we will not be discussing the crimes themselves or the complex daily political function of the disputes over these crimes, even though such debates are far from being of purely political nature. On the other hand, it is little wonder that, in the atmosphere of normalized nationalism, discussions on national crimes are about the deeper meaning of an ordinary man's identity. Recalling the crimes of one's own nation also causes great discomforts and uncertainties in ordinary people who have not been implicated in them, but whose brotherly love and national solidarity nevertheless make them feel as if their own identity has been infringed upon. Desperate attempts to purge the national identity of the crimes are the reason behind the emotionalization and resonance of the concurrent debates on Srebrenica in Serbia and the expulsion of Serbs from Croatia. Therefore, major effort is necessary toward completing an alternative approach to the hegemonic culture of memory by considering the adequacy of various identifications, comparisons, or relativizations of crimes.

HISTORICAL COMPARISON—A PREREQUISITE FOR CRITICAL MEMORY

The critical culture of memory will be clearer once the criteria for comparing the shadows of the past have been determined. The comparative approach is an important indicator of the development of the critical

non-monumental thinking about the past and the open culture of memory as an all-embracing non-academic public use of the past. To put it in more general terms, the provinciality of thinking about the past in the region is particularly marked by the following two characteristics: (1) maintaining the monumental portrayal of the national past, and (2) the absence of a parallel approach.

It is no coincidence that the vision of the glorious national past does not tolerate comparison, since every comparison trivializes it. With the glory of a nation being beyond comparison, the monumental portrayal of the national past consists of hagiographies and portentous monographs. In contrast, critical history negates the incomparableness, the very core of monumentality. While reflecting on the Western Balkan past, it has not been difficult to romanticize the theoretically and methodologically modest legacy. Historiographical Serbocentrism or Croatocentrism have been equally deprived of a non-monumental *comparative approach*, since the endangered small nations preferred to nurture their glorious past as a means of resistance to assimilation and hegemony. Romantic historiography has always been monographic; it cultivates the authority of the nation and has an educational, mobilizing function. Conversely, the parallel approach dethrones and trivializes, alleviates the feelings that dwell on the idea of unparalleled and glorious national identity. Critical history is a major propaganda of suspicion; however, this epistemological principle is not functional in societies undergoing permanent crisis. Crisis seeks homogeneity, dogma, a monolithic negative image of the public enemy and a monumental depiction of one's own past. Critical comparison shatters the myth of uniqueness and singularity—the very foundation of monumental history.

Post-socialist historiography fully restored romanticism in its inventions of a new past and reconstructions of the old one. The new wave of liberationist political culture awakened a similar culture of memory and successfully incorporated martyrology into history. Thinking the Western Balkan past has been renationalized and romanticized on the level of average German historicism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Attesting to this is the renaissance of monographs on famous monarchs written by Serbian historians and former communists from the end of the twentieth century.

No matter how exaggerated it may seem at first sight, there is essentially nothing as alien to critical memory as the ethnocentric monographic absorption in one's own glorious past and incomparable losses of one's own nation. One way to relinquish the self-mythologizing glorification is by placing one's own past within the broader frameworks that will strike a better balance between the national glory and the shadows of its past. However, not every such comparison proves useful. At the very least, it is rendered impossible by unfounded and arbitrary assumptions. Specifically, in the domestic culture of memory, there is a notable series of unreflective analogies and identifications used in attempts to make sense of the recent past. In order to see through these stereotypical assumptions, we must first be mindful of a few important considerations that should be taken into account in comparative reduction of the complexity of national past.

- a. The character of comparison is undoubtedly revealed by the comparative frame itself. The key entities under comparison lend a relatively precise portrayal of the one who does the comparing, as comparison almost spontaneously imposes meaning. Comparison is, by no means, merely a classification framework for ascertaining exact sameness, similarity or relatedness, but rather an important way of demonizing or trivializing through identification or analogy. Such unreflective anti-totalitarian equating of fascism with socialism was directed at demonizing the latter, while comparing Auschwitz with the war in the Balkans at the end of the 1990s aimed at trivializing the former. What strikes the eye in both instances is the superficial decontextualization or, more specifically, the erroneous assumption that the more similar the context, the more reliable the analogies. Measured comparisons are always about the context (traditional, ideological, causal, and functional). When drawing comparisons between crimes and misdeeds, hardly anyone inquires whether it is about a distant similarity, a functional agreement, or an essential, inherent relatedness. However, this step is of utmost importance, especially given the widely spread unreflective and arbitrary uncritical identification.

- b. History is, indeed, always about making sense, that is, a more or less exclusive attempt to arrange chaotic events into narratives or causal relationships according to the needs of the present. Current purposes and future hopes impose meaning in an almost equal measure. Hope is the other side of history, as the new future always seeks a new past as well. There is a necessity to be self-critically mindful of the fact that history is a battlefield in which memories of the past clash with hopes for the future. In other words, when interpreting some events from the past, we must always ask ourselves whether or not we subconsciously manipulate the explanations with our own expectations. After all, what is principally said about the culture of memory in the region should not serve only as an ordinary precaution. When historians venture into metaphysical sense-making, they enter a distant land from which they will never return as historians. Of course, it is not easy to resist the sense-making attempts, nor is it easy to imagine that events that are now a distant past once used to represent the future. Nevertheless, this is a crucial condition of historicity, reinforcing the criticality toward the hegemonic meaning of the present, with which we bring order into the past. The further the comparison reaches into the past, the less sense-making, framing, and narration it involves on one hand, and the more consideration on the other. Sense-making is a risky practice of imbuing past events with the present meaning, whereas consideration is a measured examination of various sides and different contexts of the past. Imagining is, again, arbitrary guessing—all with the objective of bringing the past in line with the current needs. Today, for instance, the Serbian monarchy is glorified because of the need for national unity, regardless of the fact that monarchic culture has become anachronistic. A critical assessment of the monarchy is rendered even more difficult in the atmosphere where blind loyalty prevails over critical patriotism. However, given that every sense-making stems from expectation, the element of sense-making cannot be completely eliminated, nor can a pure distillate of facts be extracted from history. The authentic historical time is not merely a past fact (event)

but a kaleidoscope of the future and the past that changes in accordance with the needs of the present. For this reason, not even historical time is ever devoid of expectation, since the past is constructed by the living people with their fears and hopes. However, the more universal the hopes, the greater the objectivity. Narrow and most often emotionally-based national needs cannot warrant cold objectivity. On the other hand, not every kind of selectivity is biased and unhistorical, since history is not photography. This is precisely the reason that makes a historian's self-reflection, or rather effort to also consider one's own interpretation as part of the historical flow, so important. In other words, one's own sense-making attempt needs to be demystified as well. Only when a historian looks on his or her own sense-making attempts with sufficient self-reflection, can he or she begin with his or her consideration. This process can be facilitated by the effort toward a hermeneutic "feeling into" the meaning of Others and a critical ideological analysis of various politicizations of history. Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that such efforts cannot be incorporated into the ethnocentric and monographic but only into the parallel approach.

- c. There is hardly any need to specifically demonstrate that comparisons are seldom inherently scientific problems and that they are far more often imposed by extra-cognitive assumptions of the collective (national, state, or party) memory. Ideational and political needs shall determine whether the use will be made of the framework for comparing or identifying (a) capitalism and fascism, (b) socialism and fascism, and (c) liberalism and socialism. Every developed epochal consciousness contains a distinctive hegemonic comparative perspective. Major debates among historians in the twentieth century (*Fischerdebatte* in the 1960s, *Historikerstreit* in the 1980s, and *Schwarzbuchdebatte* at the end of the 1990s) were not only politicized, but also carried out with a particular zeal for drawing comparisons between hardly comparable entities. The more pronounced the politicization is, the more global the analogies become, drawing comparisons between wholes rather than aspects and thus more easily ignoring

the context. Only multi-layered comparisons can divide the complex wholes into segments and compare them, while less attentive scholars or amateur historians arbitrarily compare or equate wholes.

- d. There is also a need to compare the ideational and political reasons for comparison. How similar are the cold war and globalization influences on comparative studies? The meaning of the past changed over a short period of time, with globalization opening a new future. The present neoliberal theology with strong elements of conservatism is a filter through which only the desired past operated by hegemonic ideologies can pass. The contemporary hegemonic awareness of the past differs from its cold war counterpart in that it allows no alternative. And not only that. These are two different orders of memory. The first one was dichotomous and divided into two rather homogeneous and non-conflict camps. It was characterized by a strong tension between anti-capitalism and anti-communism and various conceptions of anti-fascism. For almost half a century, the past was seen through an essentially relatively systematic image in which chaos and disorderliness were successfully downplayed with the help of hegemonic ideational and political conceptualizations of the Warsaw and NATO pacts. The present globalization order, however, is different: it is more open, less transparent, more conflict-prone, and chaotic. In post-socialist Eastern Europe, the space of memory has been renationalized, as well as universally relativized, in good part also through the influence of post-modern constructivism. Even though it is characterized by the enhanced exchange of scholarly experiences, there is nevertheless a pronounced hegemony of new frameworks of comparison that are underscored by the following notions: globalization, transition, and identity. The new ideologization, which is characterized by the anti-totalitarian and anti-terrorist image of the past, is marked by the absence of an alternative to capitalism. The hegemonic neoliberal theology and a vision of the future that offers no alternative necessitate an appropriate and simplified image of the past.

- e. The weakness and limitedness of the ethnocentric culture of memory is perhaps most evident when it comes to comparing national crimes. It is, indeed, extremely difficult to draw comparisons between the hotspots in memory, as every scaffold stirs up emotions: Jasenovac, Bleiburg, Istrian foibe, and the death of the Banat Swabians. These events are far from incomparable. But since they very easily bring up memories, the criteria for comparison must be determined clearly and with many nuances. First, distinction must be made between violence and counter-violence. Jasenovac is an example of violence and Bleiburg an example of counter-violence; the former is an act of fascist and the latter an act of anti-fascist crime. There are also various motives for killing: in the former case, they were biological and racist, and in the latter case, it was the actual or alleged dangerous conduct rather than anything related to race or biology. The Croatian order of memory today could hardly accept the conclusion that Ante Pavelić was responsible for both Jasenovac and Bleiburg. The martyrological vision of one's own past is no less of an obstacle to differentiated comparison than monumental history. In the blind culture of memory, the losses of my nation are beyond comparison. The martyrological history is condemned to monographs or comparisons with mythical apocalypses: the Serbs and the Croats each consider themselves a chosen nation to protect Christian Europe from the East. In 1986 Pavelić's minister, Andrija Artuković,⁸ described Croatia at a trial in Zagreb as *ante murale Christianitatis*. At that time, this still appeared an ancient anachronism, but a few years later when Croatian president Tuđman used the same phrase, the spirit of the explosive past resurfaced immediately. The next trap that comes up in comparing scaffolds is that trivialization is almost imperceptible. The crimes of one's own group are almost subconsciously minimized or relativized by accentu-

8 Andrija Artuković was a lawyer, politician, and senior member of a Croatian nationalist and fascist Ustasha organization. He held the Interior and Justice portfolios in the "Independent" State of Croatia. He was the one who signed the laws against Serbs, Jews, and Roma, and was responsible for a string of concentration camps in Croatia at the time.

ating the crimes of others: Dresden vs. Auschwitz, German refugees from the East vs. the German genocide, Hitler vs. Stalin, Bleiburg vs. Jasenovac, foibe vs. fascist terror, Kravice⁹ vs. Srebrenica, and so on. The banality lies in the subtext of this rhetoric: others were no angels either.

Every sense-making process depends on the breadth of the comparative framework (Balkan, European, world). The narrower the framework, the bigger the danger of overestimating the singularity of the developments. However, within a broader framework, monumentalization is eliminated only to face the danger of trivialization through comparison: German conservatives and nationalists are always keen to compare Auschwitz with the Gulag, by trivializing German crimes and minimizing the unparalleled and incomparable crimes of Nazism, and thus unloading the national past. It is necessary to compare not only the consequences of the crime but the reasons for it as well. Needless to say, various reasons for the suffering in Auschwitz and the Gulag, as well as the death of a Hebrew child in the Warsaw ghetto, can be equated to the death of a kulak child in a Ukrainian kolkhoz only from the ethical point of view and not from the sociological one. The kulaks could be re-educated, whereas the Hebrews could only be eliminated. Killing for biological reasons differs from killing because of something that happened or, rather, something that allegedly happened. The epilogue may be the same, but the reasons vary. We cannot understand the reason and motive for killing through moral judgment. This does not imply that we cannot compare certain secondary functional similarities as to how the authoritarian regimes organized violence in concentration camps. But the comparison of reasons is inevitable.

- f. Comparisons should never be avoided, and methodologically speaking, there is even no such thing as incomparability. Any-

9 Kravice is a village in Southeastern Bosnia where two crimes occurred during the war in Bosnia. In January 1993, the village was attacked and badly damaged by Bosnian forces who also killed eleven civilians. Two and a half years later, between 1,000 and 1,500 Bosnian males trying to escape Srebrenica had been captured and were brought to Kravica. At least 300 were executed by Serbian forces.

thing and everything can be compared, and each comparison is justified by its own theoretical scholarly productivity. The public use of history abides by one rule: Tell me how you compare and I will tell you who you are. It has long been known that the greater the contextual similarity is, the more relevant the comparison becomes: it is more appropriate to compare the Gulag to Goli otok¹⁰ than to Auschwitz. Jasenovac and Auschwitz belong to one group, and Bleiburg and foibe to another. Crimes cannot be decontextualized. The bombing of Coventry is not the same as the bombing of Dresden, and the tandem Hitler–Himmler is not the same as the tandem Churchill–Harris. The victims of Wehrmacht are not the same as the victims of the Red Army, nor can the victims of Jasenovac be equated with the victims of Bleiburg. The comparative framework must be analyzed and considered rather than have an a priori ascribed meaning. History in the Balkan region has always been more about making sense than exact reconstructions and considerations of the past.

- g. Every comparison requires us to find a well-measured distance between incomparability and comparability. Incomparability may manifest itself in the form of monumental history (the Serbian past is the most glorious) or in the form of critical admission of crime *sui generis* (nothing in postwar Europe can compare to Srebrenica). Every comparison is a delicate test of historicity. Comparison reveals the research equation and testifies to the one who draws the comparison. It less often reveals caution and meticulousness, and far more often naïve arrogance. Much more than restraint and complexity, it reveals the expectations and the sense-making formula used by the one who does the comparing. In Croatia, Dušan Bilandžić¹¹ compares the

10 Goli otok is a barren, uninhabited island in the Northern Adriatic (Croatia). Between 1949 and 1989, it was the larger political prison in former socialist Yugoslavia. Until 1956 and through the whole Informbiro period, this was a strict political prison. Later on, some other prisoners were also sent to Goli otok to serve their sentences. Among 16,000 political prisoners who served there, between 400 and 600 died on the island.

11 Croatian historian who in the 1980s wrote the first history of Socialist Yugoslavia.

Ustasha and the partisans, classifying them as totalitarian regimes, while separating the Home Guards as the only part of the Croatian democratic vertical between Maček¹² and Tuđman.¹³ Such a version of anti-totalitarian comparison creates a dark background in contrast to the new bright national democracy. Historians invest far less effort in harmonizing their positions on real history than in refining the “present pasts.”

After all, as stated above, it does not appear to be easy to incorporate a parallel approach into the domestic culture of memory and historiography, and it still cannot be subject to measured comparison without any risk. This, precisely, seems to be the reason that parallel research on the revision of the past reveals the triviality and similarity of new politics dealing with the past far more clearly than a monographic approach. And this, in turn, is why the social climate does not favor confronting the past within a broader parallel plan. How could it be any different in a situation in which the past is an active political weapon? If it were different, the critical culture of memory, at the core of which lies the methodology of multi-layered comparison, would most certainly be less topical. Here, I have only given a few of its indications. Finally, it is wise to keep in mind that history can tailor a myth that strengthens homogeneity, but it can also be an inconvenient critical science. Due to history's ambiguity, there is always an open question as to what the future of the past will be like, since the future present also depends on it.

12 Vladko Maček (1879–64) was one of the most influential Croatian politicians within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. He led the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*) and after assassination of his predecessor Stjepan Radić became a main opponent of Yugoslav King Alexander. In 1933 he was arrested and sentenced to three years in jail for treason. He was released after Alexander's assassination by Ustasha while on a state visit to France in 1934.

13 Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest*, 107–20.

The Struggle for Legitimacy: Constructing the National History of Slovakia After 1989¹

Miroslav Michela

Narratives of the heroic and tragic past are important for the construction of group identifications, differentiating between “us” and “them.” After the collapse of the communist dictatorships in 1989, many discussions were unleashed in Central Europe in order to come to terms morally and professionally with the “short twentieth century.” In Slovakia, the issue was mainly associated with World War II and communist era, partly depicted as a result of foreign interference, and connected with suppression of human rights, pluralism of opinion, or property-related wrongdoings. At the same time, a declared goal of this discussion was to build positive traditions supporting the revival of civil society. Seeking a consensus on the “true and objective history,” where the legitimacy of the new coming order was based on symbolic rejection of communist past, discussions about national history become important for negotiating the new historical patterns of a new

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social order. More than twenty years later, no significant agreement has been reached while the discussion has devolved into rhetorical trench warfare between two dominant interpretative platforms. Behind each interpretation stands a host of committed social actors, such as politicians, witnesses, academics, as well as academic or cultural institutions linked to them.

Here I discuss the rise of this polarization of contemporary Slovak historiography, which was institutionalized in the 1990s, and still remains in the academic debates, and also as one of the constitutive elements in the public representations of history. The efforts to enforce a certain canonical interpretation of the past are not just a matter of politics or professionals. Academics often give it legitimacy or even create it, and are a part of the institutional networks involved in the dissemination of knowledge and ideas. Shared representations of the past are not accidentally produced by social groups, but are a consequence of cultural meditation, primarily of textualization and visualization.²

French historian Pierre Nora has argued that within the context of research on sites of memory, history and memory are essentially opposites. Nora referred to memory as selective because it is based on emotions and justifies memories, which, conversely, should be demolished by historical criticism. In contrast, he defined historiography as an always problematic and incomplete reconstruction, an intellectual work that requires analytical and critical approach, striving to avoid self-censorship and excessive emotional ties to the subject of research.³ Jacques Le Goff has argued that historiography inherently complicates our knowledge and makes it problematic, while, on the contrary, some simplification occurs when remembering. He drew attention to the difference between the history of historians (scientific) and that of collective memory (mythical, lived). The task of historians is to explain the history and refute the false.⁴ Both of these approaches thus embrace a dichotomy between the concepts of historiography and memory.⁵ However, the limits of strict separation of expert and non-scientific

2 See, more precisely, Tamm, "Beyond History and Memory," 461.

3 Nora, "Between Memory and History."

4 Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 106–108.

5 Ferencová and Nosková, *K otázce studia paměti a města*.

knowledge have been questioned by post-modernist theory, which has argued that all historical narrative is influenced by language and stylistic forms. Historians who aspire to write “just the facts” still operate within literary genres.⁶ However, as Roger Chartier has noted, this does not mean that the products of historians are the same as fiction, because history is guided by intention and the principle of veracity, that the past that has given itself to us as a subject is a fact that is external to the discourse, and the knowledge can be verified.⁷

Nora also drew attention to the thick relationship between historiography and politics of memory in regards to the writing of histories as a catalyst for national traditions. In the nineteenth century, for example, historiography played an essential role in constructing national identities.⁸ The work of László Vörös has also pointed to a strong link between “traditional” historiographies and nationalist policies: “the primary objective of traditional historiographies is the production of identity-forming narratives.”⁹ This element—which in the Slovak case could be called the “national awakening ethos,” based on the continual demands to “awake,” “support,” and “defend” the national consciousness—has long been evident in both historiography and public debates, regardless of the period or ideology of its proponents.

HOW TO RESTORE UNDERMINED LEGITIMACY?

After the fall of state socialism in Czechoslovakia, there was a gradual transformation in political, economic, and social relations connected with transition from a system of state control to liberal capitalism. Nevertheless, it is also possible to observe considerable continuities embodied in everyday habits and social and economic frameworks.¹⁰ Significant progress was made in primary history research; a lot of

6 See, for example, Šuch, *Naratívny konštruktivizmus Haydena Whita a Franka Ankersmitha*.

7 Chartier, *Na okraji útesu*, 16–17.

8 See, for example, Apor, “Hitelesség és hitetlenség,” 167–68; Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*.

9 Vörös, *Analytická historiografia versus národné dejiny*, 2; Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance*, 3.

10 For the discussion on continuity and discontinuity of the 1980s and 1990s, see, for example, Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation*.

undiscussed topics were opened and archival research has increased. But, as Michal Kopeček pointed out, this doesn't necessarily imply elaboration of new methods.¹¹ The desire for change was voiced as early as the mass demonstrations of November 1989, through anti-communist slogans and various references to the historical traditions. In addition to criticizing totalitarianism, protesters commonly demanded a "new history," commonly understood as "objective" history, which would not only bring epistemological and philosophical changes, but also a history that reflected society's moral renewal. Slogans of social rebirth linked to the "true interpretation of the past" became popular. Public debate on the need to restore capitalism or to reform socialism often referenced the first Czechoslovak Republic and the Prague Spring of 1968. However, sociological studies of that time showed vast disparities in the meaning of the past between the Czech and Slovak Republics.¹²

Political efforts to "come to terms with the past" focused mainly on eliminating people closely associated with the former regime from public life and on rectifying economic wrongs. Several legal norms were adopted in 1990, ranging from political rehabilitations, through property restitution and lustration, under which, for example, collaborators of the State Security and high representatives of the Communist Party were prohibited from serving in the government, courts, and security forces.¹³ Simultaneous process to that in the political realm was taking place in the symbolic organization of public space. These or very similar issues were happening in the entire post-communist world.

The role of the new Slovak historiography in the period of transformation was formulated by historian Július Mészáros in the most influential Slovak historical journal as an "urgent task to refine and objectivise the view of our nation's history. [...] Historians have also a [...] duty to examine the capacity and hierarchy of values of the previous historical milestones and traditions, specifically in the links to our present and the future predictions."¹⁴ Unlike the situation in the

¹¹ Kopeček, "In Search for 'National Memory,'" 75.

¹² More on the topic in Tížik, *Náboženstvo vo verejnom živote na Slovensku*, 160–68.

¹³ See more on the topic in Dinuš, *Vyrovňovanie sa s minulosťou*, 18–33.

¹⁴ Mészáros, "Nežná revolúcia a štúrovská národná tradícia," 467.

Czech and Moravian part of the country, extensive personnel changes in the community of the Slovak historians have not occurred. The first post-revolutionary Chairman of the Slovak Historical Society (SHS), Richard Marsina, explained the reasons for this stability at the Society's 10th Congress: "SHS has chosen a practice of elaborating on the positive features from the past in addition with the critical analysis and overcoming of expert and organisational, ideological, but also ethical deformations of the past."¹⁵ This "rebirth" initially invoked a kind of self-censorship or self-purging of the past. Many historians ceased to reference their older work on their CVs. Scholarship from before 1989 was marked as merely an ideological product—biased history, written according to party dictates. Several prominent historians, however, criticized this campaign to delegitimize the whole communist-era work. Ľubomír Lipták noted as early as 1990 that

[O]ur historiography of the more recent period does not enjoy good health or a good reputation. One does not need extraordinary powers of observation or today even courage to see that. Sadly, it seems that we should vehemently reject anything published in the last twenty or even forty years. One can understand why dissatisfied consumers might demand this. However, we see the same demand made by many of the culprits who created these distortions and were eager "normalisers" [the post-Prague Spring policy of repression]. They thus can cloak themselves with anonymity amidst the soundly condemned, repentant, yet then ultimately pardoned historical community. [...] I page once again through our journals, proceedings, and monographs. These are thousands of pages here, thousands of facts, the majority true in themselves and maybe even important. Yet the voice of the public is clear: Where is our history, why do you keep it secret from us, and when you write about it, why do you lie?¹⁶

A year later historian Ivan Kamenec responded in a similar vein, pointing out a desire to fetishize and demonize the previous regime. Al-

15 *Historický časopis* 39, nos. 4–5 (1991): 369. See also Hudek, "Totalitno-historické rozprávacie."

16 Lipták, "Poznámky k historiografii novších dejín."

though he accepted constructive criticism of the so-called Marxist historiography—such as its conceptional rigidity and ideological manipulations, manifested especially in the selection of topics and conclusions—he denounced the amateurish and opportunistic media campaign that had been unleashed against historians. He especially criticized denunciatory articles accusing historians of lying about the past or treating certain topics as taboo.¹⁷ Kamenec was sceptical that an unencumbered interpretation of history, as anticipated by the public, was possible: “We should open the eyes of the public, but also of many politicians who once again have given us tasks to do, and disabuse them of the notion that historians now have a magic wand of knowledge in their hands, and that they will now tell the truth about the particular event or personality, and thus help to correct the most serious and the most recent socio-political problems.”¹⁸ As sociologist Miloš Havelka pointed out, a return to the concept of ideologically unencumbered “objective science,” which has established itself strongly among historians as neo-empiricism and a distrust of theorizing, has brought merely a new wave of ideologization.¹⁹

Richard Marsina also responded to the tabloidization of history by criticizing the professional shortcomings of contemporary Slovak journalism:

At the same time, it is interesting that the authors of these papers are very rarely experts concerned with these issues. They are mostly accidental or purposeful copiers of syntheses or monographs who arbitrarily manipulate the texts, sometimes so egregiously that they arrive at significantly different conclusions than their originals. As they often retell these events in a compelling and sensational manner, often at odds with past reality, they are obviously more welcome in editors’ offices [...] than renowned experts on the given issues.²⁰

¹⁷ Kamenec, “Ako sa vidíme sami a ako nás vidí verejnosť,” 488–89.

¹⁸ Ibid., 491. For several reflections of historiography but also historical culture in Slovakia after 1989, see Kamenec, *Spoločnosť – politika – historiografia*.

¹⁹ More on the topic in Havelka, “Touha po ideológiách a strach z teorie.”

²⁰ Marsina, “O istých črtách terajšieho stavu slovenskej historiografie,” 8.

Lubomír Lipták also pointed out the dangers and shallowness of bombastic journalism, as well as the dangers of a lack of communication between scholars and the public:

The destruction of historical knowledge among the public today is such that there is actually no fact, no person or no event that we could consider as indisputable, as a basis on which one could further build and develop ideas, or confront opinions. Nowadays, the most needed and the most successful book on history would be a book titled *The History of Slovakia for Beginners*.²¹

These reflections highlight a significant problem for historians in post-socialist societies. Often referred to as mere tools of the former regime, these historians felt to be losing legitimacy with the public. In post-socialist countries, also other actors began to fulfill the strong demand for new information. A gap opened up between academic discourse, cultivated in the environment of universities and scientific institutes, and a public discourse, cultivated by and enthusiastic amateurs and witnesses (often returning émigrés) claiming to be the rightful interpreters of history. The controlled discourse of the Socialist era was replaced by a plurality—even a cacophony—of voices. Everyone defined their mission as seeking objectivity and rebutting falsehoods. “Objectivity,” however, meant something different for each of the actors who tried to assert their own interpretation of the past. Namely a claim that one’s version is correct.

The social pressure that these academics complained about mainly originated in the media. The mandatory glorification of the workers’ movement, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the Great October Socialist Revolution, or the fight against fascism, was now replaced by the sensational “revelations,” polemics or publications “unearthing the truth” or filling in the *biele miesta*, the blank papers (or censored topics) of Slovak history. Freedom of speech was a constitutive element of the discourse of the Velvet Revolution²² and the mass media strove

21 Lipták, “Poznámky k historiografii nových dejín,” 691.

22 More on the ideals of November in Krapfl, *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou*, 101–47.

to offer great and sensational revelations or stories of forgotten, unheralded heroes. Long marginalised and execrated themes re-emerged, as well as old/new social actors and narratives of heroic past, victimhood and mourning. In some cases, this amounted to just a reinterpretation or institutionalisation of coexisting parallel discourses of the past. After all the years, some influential authors (such as Jozef Jablonický) returned as public intellectuals, publishing works that had been suppressed or neglected during the normalization era.²³

NATIONAL HISTORY—THE MAIN FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSIONS

After 1989 Jacques Rupnik stressed the so-called return of history in Central Europe, as a kind of return of nationalistic demons²⁴ unleashing again the historical forces that had been “frozen” by communism. In public discourse in Slovakia, this was translated into specific discussions about the “national history” and the successful promotion of nationalist rhetoric. Topics that had just recently been taboo, stories from the past and nationalist interpretations and arguments provided a feeling of security and stable ground in the unfamiliarity of the “new” world. Class discourse based on an objectified popular movement was recoded as nationalist. The essential variable of the “people” was rather smoothly replaced with the established general term of “nation,” which “developed,” “suffered,” “fought,” “celebrated victories,” and “withstood losses” like the people had done before. That is to say, this history again embodied the idea of a collective actor endowed with its own will formulated back in the nineteenth century. Péter Niedermüller pointed out three contemporary strategies of how the “discourse of national” was established in post-communist countries: by the *restoration* and *reconstruction*, with the aim to recover “what was prohibited” and “misinterpreted” in the communist regime and at least by *mythologization*, which served as integrative element for the restored and reconstructed narratives into the broader ideological and historical sense.²⁵ This kind of “return to origins,” presented as an attempt to re-

²³ See, for example, Jablonický, *Povstanie bez legend*; Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*.

²⁴ Rupnik, *Jiná Evropa*.

²⁵ Niedermüller, “Rethinking History.”

construct the true traditions and values, rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps, was pointed out by Svetlana Boym as a restorative nostalgia.²⁶ Strong politically and culturally motivated anti-communist statements, merging with the unelected national history paradigm and the upsurge of memorialism, result in the vague notion of national memory with clearly nationalist underpinnings, which is becoming an indispensable part of the public political discourse in the whole region.²⁷

The reinforcement of nationalist discourses in Slovakia aimed to restore previously existed social cohesion, and has relatively quickly and efficiently colonized the public sphere. New discourses drew from past nationalist projects.²⁸ Nationalism did not disappear during the socialist dictatorship, although it was adapted to the needs of socialism, as evidenced by both history textbooks and the works of the influential Slovak writer Vladimír Mináč.²⁹ The nineteenth-century myth of the plebeian origins of Slovaks fit comfortably in normalization history, forging a link between durable nationalist visions and the dominating theory of class struggle. Slovaks were depicted as anonymous actors of history, and the relentless struggle against oppression remained the basic plot.³⁰ Stevo Ľurašovič calls it Red-Nationalist discourse, based on the history of labor and history of striving for statehood emancipation, legitimized by national and social awakeners in uprisings of 1848–49 and 1944.³¹ And thus, after November 1989, Mináč could state with complete peace of mind: “As a communist, I have failed. As a Slovak, however, I am standing on the threshold of

26 Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 41–42.

27 Kopeček, “In Search for ‘National Memory.’”

28 The St. Cyril and Methodius cult could be mentioned as a good example. For further details, see Škvarna and Hudek, *Cyril a Metod*, 126–34. More generally, Kopeček, “Historická paměť,” 227–59.

29 Mináč, *Dúchanie do pabrieb* and *Tu žije národ*. On the relationship of nationalism and communism in Czechoslovakia, see Hudek, “Totalitno-historické rozprávanie”; Ľurašovič, “From ‘Husakism’ to ‘Mečiarism.’” For further details about contemporary discussions on Marxism and nationalism under State Socialism in Central Europe, see Kopeček, “Historical Studies of Nation-Building.”

30 Gil Eyal points out that the contemporary Slovak history was built on the ideas of constant fight against oppression—particularly from Hungarians and also Czechs. Eyal, “Identity and Trauma.”

31 Ľurašovič, “From ‘Husakism’ to ‘Mečiarism,’” 534.

a new millennium.”³² As noted by Adam Hudek, the smooth “transformation” of party intellectuals to radical nationalist separatists was facilitated by the fact that the national principle pushed the civic society agenda to the background. The struggle for independence and statehood was represented as a specific positive value.³³ A conservative critique of the liberal transformation of Slovak historiography after 1989 was later formulated by historian Emília Hrabovec, who claimed that it was symptomatic that after the fall of communism, many Eastern European historians swapped the ragged jacket of Marxism with a new, modernization corset. The costume change proclaimed allegiance to the new, Western Euro-Atlantic political model. In the end, however, this was a superficial makeover: the proletariat as the historical avant-garde was replaced by the bourgeoisie or civic class (Bürger-tum), while the end stage of history was no longer a communist world liberated from classes, nations, states, and God, but rather a global, open civil society devoid of religious, national, cultural, and historical values.³⁴

A lightning rod for controversy, meanwhile, was the question of what was the proper subject of Slovak history, alternatively, of the history of Slovakia. According to Július Mészáros, “If the Slovak nation considers spontaneously and urgently its historic past and its integration into the current revolutionary transformation, and seeks reliable historical lighthouses for its further historical pilgrimage, it is the professional duty for us as historians not only to light the way, but also to clean the dust and sludge of distortions of the past decade from their glasses.”³⁵ This moralizing, exclusivist claim reflects the prevailing view that the history of Slovakia is based primarily on the unique story of the history of Slovaks and their current territory and the need to

32 Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe*, 201. According to František Mikloško, this utterance was pronounced on April 11, 1993, in an interview with Mináč for the Swedish magazine *Svenska Dagbladet* as follows: “As a communist, I have failed. As a Slovak, I am standing on the threshold of the future. Communism has fallen, let us move on to the national themes.” Available at: <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006nr/stenprot/013schuz/so13056.htm>.

33 Hudek, “Totalitno-historické rozprávanie.”

34 Hrabovcová, “Niekoľko myšlienok na margo krízy dnešnej historickej vedy,” 15–16.

35 Mészáros, “Nežná revolúcia a štúrovska národná tradícia,” 469.

rewrite history. This trend is also illustrated by the preface of the first post-revolutionary popular book on Slovak history written by Imrich Sedlák, an official of the leading nationalist association, the *Matica slovenská*: "Our Slovak history is written, of course, from the Slovak point of view. It fundamentally rejects the concept of a historically 'unified Czechoslovak nation,' through which we are often presented to the world even today."³⁶ The statement illustrates the trend of the time, strengthening Slovak uniqueness as an opposition to the previous dominant Czechoslovak narrative. Stronger accent on "Slovakness" in socialist Czechoslovakia can be observed from 1960s.³⁷ The same pattern is evident in the introduction of the aforementioned book: "Slovak history is the history of Slovakia and the Slovaks."³⁸ However, the distribution of this publication stagnated for ideological reasons, since the views of several authors, especially in relation to modern history, were evaluated by representatives of *Matica slovenská* as insufficiently "pro-Slovak." Subsequently, more ideologically acceptable publications tried to satisfy the demand for a "national history."³⁹

Already in 1990 explicit separatist publications appeared in the Slovak book market. In a small booklet, dedicated to the idea of Slovak statehood, the prominent *Ludák* oriented⁴⁰ émigré historian Milan Stanislav Ďurica declared that

from time immemorial, the Slovak nation has had to circle its wagons in defensive, and whenever it tried to step out of this perimeter, it was cruelly knocked to the ground. Those who held no love for the Slovak nation used the most diverse means, both political and economic, to this end. Sometimes we were denied our humanity (*Tót nem ember*),⁴¹ sometimes the ability to live and express ourselves as an autonomous

36 Marsina et al., *Slovenské dejiny*, 5.

37 For more information, see Ďurašovič, "From 'Husakism' to 'Mečiarism.'"

38 Marsina et al., *Slovenské dejiny*, 7.

39 See, for example, Špiesz, *Dejiny Slovenska*; Ferko et al., *Starý národ – mladý štát*.

40 *Ludák's* are the supporters of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, which promoted a nationalist (Slovak) and strictly confessional (Catholic) oriented program in the Czechoslovak republic (1918–38), and in the period 1938–45 became a ruling party in Slovakia, collaborating with Nazi Germany.

41 "The Slovak is not a human being." Hungarians used the same expression to describe Slovenians in Hungary and in the neighboring regions in Slovenia.

nation. [...] The nation succeeded in stepping out of its circled wagons only once for a brief time [during the 1939–1945 Slovak state]. The hope to advance again was denied, first by a promise of administrative reform devised by the communists, but never fulfilled, then with a prospective federalization, gradually curtailed. The hope to finally break out, however, dawns again today ...⁴²

Although the strictly separatist rhetoric did not address too broad an audience, the idea of Hungarian and then Czech oppression, copying the Slovak autonomist critique from the first half of the twentieth century, took root in public forums. The main representative of radicalized accent was the *Matica slovenská*, serving as an umbrella for symbiosis between Ľudák oriented activists and so-called Red Nationalists. Already in the spring of 1990 the situation in Slovakia escalated to such an extent that organized demands emerged against radical (Slovak) nationalism, calling for a strengthening of Czech-Slovak relations.⁴³

In parliament, debates on the history of Czech-Slovak relations were unleashed in January 1990, resulting in the so-called Hyphen War.⁴⁴ It was a revival of an older dispute concerning the naming of the state that referred, for example, to the issues of continuity with the Second Republic (1938–39) and long-term discussed questions on “Prague centralism” and “Slovak separatism.”⁴⁵ A number of historians became involved in the debate, including the Slovak Historical Society, which supported the idea of a split state symbol and the name: Czecho-Slovakia.⁴⁶ James Krapfl has argued that it was no coincidence that this dispute flared up immediately after the attempt to democratize the structure of corporate governance and symbolized the shift of emphasis from social issues to national ones, as these categories were the source for constituting the “new society.”⁴⁷

42 Ďurica, *Slovenský národ a jeho štátnosť*, 7.

43 Žatkuliak, *November 1989 a Slovensko*, 521–24. See more on the topic also in N. Kmeť, “Reinterpretácie ‘čechoslovakizmu’ v 20. storočí,” 242–43.

44 See more details on the topic in Šútovec, *Semióza ako politikum alebo “Pomlčková vojna”*; Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa*, 211–24.

45 For more details, see Rychlík, *Rozdělení Česko-Slovenska 1989–1992*.

46 Žatkuliak, *November 1989 a Slovensko*, 463.

47 Krapfl, *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou*, 265.

In addition to the growth of the anti-Czech discourse, the “Hungarian past” was also rediscovered. This trend significantly intensified due to the division of the republic and the establishment of an independent Slovakia in 1993, responding in part to the political activation of Hungarian minority representatives in Slovakia and the Slovak-Hungarian dispute over the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros dam.⁴⁸

A BIPOLAR MODEL FOR INTERPRETING SLOVAK HISTORY?

Even more explicitly than during state socialism, when scholars focused primarily on the history of social conflicts and the “progressive traditions of the Slovak people,” the category of the nation was used in exile before 1989 as a primary lens for viewing both the past and present. There was a significant overlap between political activism and the writing of history, when in fact most of the publications issued in exile were a part of a (previously interrupted) political project. These historians were often witnesses of and actors in the events they analyzed. Their conclusions, not surprisingly, differed significantly on specific political issues connected with the existence and fall of the Slovak Republic (1939–45).

In publications by Ľudák émigrés, the “First Slovak Republic” constituted the most important and the utmost historical achievement in the “nation’s life.” Above all they celebrated the state and apologized for its policies and ruling elites, portraying them, for example, as fighters against communism.⁴⁹ The 1944 Uprising in Slovakia was depicted as a shameless betrayal of the nation—a Czechoslovak and Bolshevik coup against Slovak statehood.⁵⁰ Similarly as in the case of the Ľudák émigrés, there was a strong overlap between politics and writing about

48 More on the topic in Podoba, “Rejecting Green Velvet,” 139–43.

49 See works such as Kirschbaum, *Náš boj za samostatnosť Slovenska*; Mikus, *La Slovaquie dans le drame de l’Europe*. For more on the works by historians, see, for example, Vnuk, *Neuveriteľné sprisahanie*; Vnuk, *Rebelanti a suplikanti*. Many of these works were published after 1989 in Slovakia, too. For more on the political activities of populist/clerical-fascist/fascist exile, see Vondrášek and Pešek, *Slovenský poválečný exil*; Špetko, *Líšky kontra ježe*. For an overview of the historical arguments contained in exile production, see Korček, *Slovenská republika 1943–1945*, 9–21.

50 For example, Vnuk, *Neuveriteľné sprisahanie*.

history even among the exiled representatives of the Democratic Party. In addition to opposing communism, they also heavily criticized the Ľudáks. Their interpretative model drew from the traditions of either the 1918–38 First Republic or the 1945–48 Second Czechoslovak Republic, based on liberal nationalist approach. Many of them attended the uprising in 1944 and had been active in the leadership of the latter state.⁵¹ In that sense, Eva Hahn pointed out certain similarity between official Marxist-Leninist and unofficial dissent historiography. Both were indebted to the national-centered narrative, which after 1989 became the only way to avoid the previous tradition of writing history.⁵² These political traditions largely set the ideological parameters for both public and professional debates on post-November Slovakia. They also reflected the political trend of strengthening national identity—as the only general principle—and searching for positive role models.

According to Tomáš Sniegoň, there are four dominant historical narratives of Czech and Slovak history in the twentieth century: Czech National-Liberal, Slovak National-Catholic, Czechoslovak communist, and Slovak national-European.⁵³ Two of them, the Slovak National-Catholic and Slovak National-European (mutually labelling one another as “clerical-fascist” and “Czechoslovakist,” or even “nationalist” and “cosmopolitan” in the last years) made a breakthrough in public and academic spheres after 1989. This classification can usefully be applied to several departments, associations, scientific and cultural events, periodicals, and even school textbooks. Just to mention, the rivalry between the historians of the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (HÚ SAV) and the restored Historical Department of Matica slovenská (HO MS) produced many disputes over terminology and the interpretation of various historical periods. In these cases the division was represented by a various media outcomes and polemics of leading academic journals as *Historický časopis* (HÚ SAV) and *Historický zborník* (HO MS).

51 See, for example, Lettrich, *History of Modern Slovakia*. After the revolution, this book was published in Slovakia, in the Slovak language, in 1991 and 2012.

52 According to Kopeček, “In Search for ‘National Memory,’” 81.

53 More on the topic in Sniegoň, “Historie ve znovuzrozené volné soutěži”; Sniegon, *Vanished History*.

In recent years this classification also profitably describes sides in debates over the activities of the Nation's Memory Institute (ÚPN) as well as of some university departments. In this regard HÚ SAV was represented as the main bearer of a liberal-democratic orientation, in which the old (Marxist) cadres remained in place. HO MS has been the radical nationalist opposition, even though a number of prominent activists of *Matica slovenská* also had communist pasts.

The division has been most salient during discussions about the nature of "national history," which has often been connected to political mobilization. This was the case with the equestrian statue of Svätopluk installed at the Bratislava Castle before the parliamentary elections in 2010, as well as with the debate on the so-called Lex Hlinka in 2007, or the use of the term "Old Slovaks" to prove the Slovak ethnic primacy in the region.⁵⁴ Historians have engaged in these discussions as guardians of academic knowledge and resourceful critics of the "abuse of history," but also as social activists and politicians pursuing their own agendas. There is an overlap of social roles, as academics become political actors, while politicians talk about history "as it really happened." But a few historians left academic sphere as well and started to build career as politicians. One of them was Anton Hrnko, who was one of the founders of the Slovak national party and had an important role in activation of Slovak Historical Society in the above mentioned Hyphen War.⁵⁵

Similar rivalries, primarily based on confessional differences, have existed in the Slovak environment since the nineteenth century. This Catholic and Lutheran competition in regards to the nation stemmed in part from the fact that most active intellectuals at that time were priests. After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, this bipolarity was represented in the relationship between supporters of centralist or autonomist politics. The terms "autonomist" and "Czechoslovakist" identified not only opposed political positions but also

54 For more details, see, for example, Mesežnikov and Gyárfášová, *Národný populizmus na Slovensku*; Vörös, "Problém s pojmom 'starí Slováci'"; Buzalka, "The Political Lives of Dead Populists in Post-Socialist Slovakia."

55 Holly and Hudek, "K reakciám Slovenskej historickej spoločnosti"; Cohen, "Politics without a Past."

competing discourses on history. The former one advocated the existence of a political (in some schemes, also ethnic) Czechoslovak nation, and stressed democratic principles linked to the existence of the First Republic. Central to the latter discourse was the idea of national autonomy linked to conservative-authorial values, and also very important was that it became hegemonic during the period of 1938–45.⁵⁶ Based on the long-term county election results in Slovakia, Vladimír Krivý hypothesized that the success of national populist parties in 1920s, 1930s, and 1990s (with some similarities in 2000s and 2010s as well) was the result of the reproduction of long-term patterns of political behavior.⁵⁷

The clash of these two groups was most dramatically observed in the mid-1990s in the so-called Ďurica case.⁵⁸ It was launched by the publication of an auxiliary textbook (a chronology) by the émigré historian and professor of theology, entitled *The History of Slovakia and the Slovaks*. A second, revised edition came out in 1996 in a print run of about 100,000 copies.⁵⁹ An attempt to introduce this publication into the public schools curriculum—a step severely criticized by many experts—triggered a wave of opposition both at home and abroad. Historians played an important role in this high-profile conflict. An important factor in this clash was the political situation in which the government of Vladimír Mečiar was striving to transform the previous historical consciousness and to “strengthen the national identity.”⁶⁰ The Matica slovenská and other radical nationalist organizations meanwhile offered Mečiar helping hands. Some of their members and sympathizers even drew parallels between the Slovak Republic of 1993 with that of 1939, when according to emigrant Štefan Polakovič a

56 For more, see Hudek, “Slovenská historiografia”; Rychlík, “Początki, rozwój i zanik czechosłowakizmu.” For the most recent sources on the Slovak interwar historiography and the issue of czechoslovakism, see Ducháček, *Václav Chaloupecký*.

57 Krivý, Feglová and Balko, *Slovensko a jeho regióny*; Buzalka, “The Political Lives of Dead Populists in Post-Socialist Slovakia,” 329.

58 More on this topic in Mannová, “Der Kampf um Geschichtslehrbücher in der Slowakei,” 125–35; “Slovensko a fenomén Ďurica” (round table discussion); Findor, “Národná identita ako naratívna konštrukcia.”

59 Since then the book has been published several times, the latest, 5th re-edition (2013) grew to 930 pages in comparison to its 287 page 1st edition.

60 See, for example, Johnson, “Begetting & Remembering.”

Ľudák philosopher the existence of the state led by Jozef Tiso significantly strengthened Slovak national consciousness and its “national personality and existential maturation.”⁶¹ In late 1995 a bill was proposed in the SNR to give the Matica control over the SAV’s historical and literary institutes. According to Peter Zajac, the director of the Literary Institute, the bill was a “gross attempt” to force the SAV to conform to the Matica’s “ideology of the 1939–1945 Tiso years and the denial of the Slovak National Uprising.” Then, in May 1996, the ministry of education rejected an 8th grade textbook written by Kamenec, Lipták, and Kováč. In a release to the Czech Press Service, the ministry attacked the textbook as a “one-sided look at [Slovak] history and statehood” that “insufficiently examines some aspects of national history.” In its place, they would adopt Ďurica’s *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov*.⁶² Ďurica’s book was defended by the Bratislava-Trnava Archbishop’s Office, which issued a statement that the publication was “unique in the history of the Slovak nation. As the first published book dealing with history, it raises the national consciousness, so faint especially in the younger generation.”⁶³ Ďurica’s supporters praised in particular the “objective” and “pro-Slovak” nature of his work.

During this scandal, it was easy to distinguish between the competing camps. The group around Matica, backed by the state institutions and prominent Catholic clergy, faced off against a majority of local academics supported by opposition politicians and foreign colleagues, the Lutheran Church, and civic as well as Jewish associations. Particularly striking was the intervention in the dispute of high-ranking members of the Catholic hierarchy, as well as the debate that was launched over denying and downplaying responsibility for the Holocaust.⁶⁴ Scholars from the HÚ SAV released an open letter in which they criticized the low professional quality of the book: “The selection of the facts is often random and biased; their interpretation starkly contrasts with current historical scholarship. The book revives old, overturned myths, and

61 Polakovič, *Eseje o národe*, 187–89.

62 Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, 277.

63 *Kritika & Kontext* 2–3 (1997): 62–63.

64 For more on Holocaust denial in this period in Slovakia, see Meštan, *Antisemitizmus v politickom vývoji Slovenska 1989–1999*.

contains many untruths and mystifications.”⁶⁵ Similarly, historian Jan Rychlík complained that Ďurica “carefully selects facts in order to justify his artificially created concept.”⁶⁶ In a response humbly titled *Getting Closer to the Truth*, Ďurica defended his interpretation while rejecting the vast majority of criticisms.⁶⁷ In the end, however, the book was withdrawn from the schools. This resulted in part because of pressure from Brussels, as the publication had been partly funded by the European Union’s (EU’s) PHARE fund. A nationalist attempt to absorb the HÚ SAV into the Matica slovenská failed as well.

Despite this sharp cleavage between camps, Slovakia’s historians and their work cannot be viewed only through this lens. Despite the heat of these disputes, the competing organizations proved their ability to work together. According to Elena Mannová, “the impression of a clearly visible polarisation is gradually fading away as soon as we depart from the disputes over writing and look at particular scientific works.”⁶⁸ Within Slovakia’s community of historians and their current scholarship, one can speak of a common ground, characterized by conformist stillness, whether in regard to the above topics or to the theoretical and conceptual debates that are implicit in them. Most historians in Slovakia deal in particular with traditional political history, largely enclosed within national and local interpretative frameworks.⁶⁹ Pavel Kolář pointed out that the hostile attitude to theories among historians had its roots in normalization and stemmed from the fact that Marxism was not taken seriously for a long time before the fall of the communist dictatorship. No influential methodological innovations took place. The Marxist interpretive framework was hollowed out, as classics were cited pro forma, but then the authors offered a traditional linear story.⁷⁰ In spite of the fact that methodology has gradually evolved in Slovakia, historians still cultivate traditional political history. An uncritical narrative approach and a kind of fetishization of ar-

65 *Kritika & Kontext* 2–3 (1997): 34–40.

66 Rychlík, “Deformovaný výklad slovenských dejín,” 53.

67 Ďurica, *Priblížiť sa k pravde*.

68 Mannová, “Clio na slovenský spôsob,” 244.

69 More on the topic in Michela, “Strážcovia strateného času.”

70 Kolář, “Nenápadné okovy Kleió,” 226.

chival sources prevail. Unfortunately, this has left Slovak scholarship provincial, largely disconnected from the global trends. As an example, a number of scholars whose research is related to topics like nationalism and national movements, rarely rely on theoretical works and terms widely accepted and referenced in international scholarship.

AUTONOMY OR UPRISING?

After some émigré historians lectured in Slovakia in 1990, a new discussion opened among academics about the reinterpretation of “national history.” The academic legitimacy of émigrés was based partly on argument that they represented Western democratic culture—that they came from the free world, offering the fruits of research in Western archives and original arguments to the debate about the history of Slovakia. In the beginning these historians for the most part sincerely strove to exchange ideas and knowledge, despite very different cultural backgrounds and views. These discussions were facilitated by the “common” platform of a post-revolutionary reflection on Slovak historiography in both public and academic forums. For example, in 1992, a symposium was organized on Josef Tiso, the president of the 1939–45 Slovak Republic. The event was held with the support of the Slovak National Council, and the most influential Slovak and foreign historians attended. The aim was to stimulate a serious scholarly investigation into the character of the controversial executed president, a topic which filled headlines and bookshelves at the time. But at same time, some amateurs were also invited to speak at the event. That is to say, one goal of the conference was also public relations, as part of the Slovak historiography push to regain credibility.⁷¹ Starting in 1990 reprints of émigré publications had flooded the market in a blatant attempt to rehabilitate Tiso.⁷² The symposium’s published proceedings, *An Attempt at*

⁷¹ Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, 275.

⁷² As early as March 14, 1990, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Declaration of the Slovak State, a photograph of J. Tiso appeared on the front page of the magazine 23,55, titled *A Criminal or a Saint?* Readers could read the opinions of F. Vnuk and M.S. Ďurica on the topic. A great acclaim arose from unveiling a plaque of J. Tiso in Bánovce nad Bebravou in the summer of 1990, which was consecrated by Bishop Ján Chryzostom Korec. The Slota radical wing of SNS adopted Tiso as an election symbol. See early mimeographed copies of

a *Personal and Political Profile of Jozef Tiso*, contained articles of wildly divergent quality and opinion, and some of them didn't meet the basic standards of historical writings.⁷³

This symposium failed to promote further an open professional debate; rather, the pattern was now mud-slinging and denunciation. Several scholars who had published in both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods (including the director of HÚ SAV Dušan Kováč) were branded as "Bolshevik," "Czechoslovakist historians," "Jews," or those who had "sold out" and "betrayed the nation." Historian Jozef Jablonický commented on the situation that had arisen: "Supporters of black Ľudák totalitarianism want to change the image of Slovak history and influence the nation's memory. The biographies and memories published fit into their political intentions. Let us not be satisfied with the fact that the Ľudák nationalists have not taken over historiography and have found no broad support in Slovak society."⁷⁴

In this respect, the Slovak National Uprising (SNP), one of the most celebrated historical events after 1945, became a litmus test. SNP was a focal point of Slovak historical consciousness, which was constructed very systematically after World War II. By 1989, for example, at least 140 feature films and documentaries had been made about the uprising. SNP had also been the focus of a political competition over its meaning, as postwar elites sought to base their own legitimacy on its legacy.⁷⁵ After 1989, remembering and discussing the uprising in professional forums oscillated between two sharply distinguished positions: "for" and "against." Once the rehabilitation of the Tiso regime was put on the table, political elites regarded SNP's celebration as a national holiday and highpoint of Slovak history as proof that the Ľudák activists had failed to recast SNP as a treasonous coup, by which they also sought to rehabilitate the Slovak Republic of 1939–45. Along these lines, a 1993 anti-SNP seminar (held in Bratislava as a protest and ti-

Slovenské národné noviny. For more on the topic, see Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa*, 266–68, 266–70; Kmeť, "Zápas o minulosť, prítomnosť a budúcnosť," 418–19; Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator*, 270–71.

73 Bystrický and Fano, *Pokus o politický a osobný profil Jozefa Tisu*.

74 Jablonický, "Spomienky a životopisy." For the activities of Jozef Jablonický in this period, see Kmeť, "Zápas o minulosť, prítomnosť a budúcnosť," 411–32.

75 Mannová, "Jubiläumskampagnen."

tled *Dies Ater*—*Unhappy Day*) sparked vigorous responses from scholars as a whole.⁷⁶

In the wake of the above conflicts, historical debates shifted from immediate, face-to-face communication to the formation of two competing blocs, which more or less gave up on meaningful discussion and focused instead on strengthening their own positions. At the same time a pattern emerged of excluding the competition from events, of developing parallel institutions, and of claiming sole legitimacy for one's own approach. A conference held on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the 1939–45 Slovak Republic serves as an example. Ján Bobák, a historian from Matica slovenská, claimed here to have organized the first scientific event “in which the issues were approached without political and ideological biases and prejudice.”⁷⁷ At the same time, historians affiliated with the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences continued to participate at all levels of the academic sphere (including international conferences), in contrast with historians from Matica who appeared mostly on local events in Slovakia.

ATTEMPT FOR A THIRD WAY?

In the 2000s, a new generation of scholars, fresh university graduates interested in the history of the Slovak autonomist movement and the 1939–45 Slovak state, added their voices to these public and academic discussions. One of their most prominent representatives, Martin Lacko, offered in the introduction of what has become a series of conference proceedings, *The Slovak Republic through the Eyes of Young Historians*, a claim to their legitimacy as interpreters of the Slovak past. According to him, this generation was neither tied to state power nor to the two competing camps. Thus, they would contribute to a more objective work on the history of Slovakia.⁷⁸ Lacko thus outlined the option of a “third way.” To symbolize the “young historians” impartiality, he engaged members from both competing camps in the proj-

76 Mulík et al., *Dies Ater*. See also Jablonický, *Glosy o historiografii SNP*; Pekník, “Slovenské národné povstanie,” 425–34.

77 Bobák, *Slovenská republika 1939–1945*, 7.

78 Lacko, “Príhovor organizátora,” 8–9.

ect, ostensible proof that the new generation did not toe either party's line, but would endorse arguments on their merits alone.

A changing of the guard had long been called for by the prominent émigrés like Ďurica.⁷⁹ The belief that young and ideologically unencumbered historians could produce a “true interpretation of history” assumed that personal “immaculateness” was more important than erudition. These are dubious assertions at best. Nevertheless, the strategy succeeded for some time. A similar idea was brought forward by the founders of the Nation's Memory Institute in 2002 with an aim to “conduct a full and impartial assessment of the period of oppression, to analyze the causes and manner of loss of freedom, and to analyze the manifestations of the fascist and communist regimes and their ideologies.”⁸⁰ So far, however, this attempt to make a significant impact on the debate has failed. Some success appeared in launching an archival research. But rather than providing innovative new interpretations, the “young historians” have largely ploughed the same ground. For instance, some younger historians at the Nation's Memory Institute have been and continue to be justly criticized for apologizing for the Slovak Republic of 1939–45.⁸¹

One argument in the debate over wartime Slovakia is that the regime should be separated from the state, a proposition that has recently been popularized not only by young nationalist historians, but also by politicians. In this case the state is the fruit of the struggle for national self-determination. Such arguments, however, are but fodder for radical nationalism—just a different version of émigré apologies. This approach, for example, was used to justify the installation of a bust in Western Slovakia of Ferdinand Ďurčanský, a prominent Ľudák politician, sentenced in absentia to death by a communist dominated National (retribution) court after World War II.⁸²

79 Even in 2009 Ďurica wrote, “Today there is really a lack of free, unencumbered scientists, independent from anyone” (Ďurica, *Slovenské dejiny*, 19).

80 Act no. 553/2002 Coll. on nation's memory. Available at: <http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2002-553>; Kopeček, “In Search for ‘National Memory,’” 86–92.

81 For example, <http://www.tyzden.sk/spolocnost/26383/upn-tri-pismena-o-neslobode>; Dinuš, *Výrovnávanie sa s minulosťou*, 55.

82 Vodrážka, “O civilizačným regresu slovenské minulosti a súčasnosti.”

Such methodology neither contributes to a critical historiography nor to productive discussions; it simply promotes the interpretive status quo with little exception (more willing to accept human rights criticism of the Slovak state than the Ľudáks camp). Nowadays, Lacko has identified the relationship “to Slovak statehood, the dispute between the national and the cosmopolite principle” as the fundamental dividing line for Slovakia’s historians. According to him the national approach “preserves the principles of scientific inquiry, but in doing so it does not give up the values of national history, thus maintaining and cultivating the nation’s memory.” Historiographical cosmopolitanism, in turn, is unable to draw an objective, true picture of Slovak history. Contesting these claims is seen by him as equivalent to threatening the mission of Slovak historiography.⁸³ Such arguments, of course, parallel Ďurica’s: “One who does not love this nation will not be able to understand it historically.”⁸⁴

According to Elena Mannová, some sociological surveys after 1989 have revealed that many Slovaks are able to view both the Slovak National Uprising and the Tiso regime positively.⁸⁵ A similar phenomenon can be seen in the efforts of current Slovak scholarship to construct a “new” narrative of the wartime period. The statehood and national autonomy is now seen as natural and as such it does not represent a unique topic of discussions. It appears from time to time in argumentations of radical nationalists whose agenda is based on stimulating the constant feeling of threat.⁸⁶

The story of the post-revolutionary Slovak historical scholarship demonstrates that the boundaries between academic discourse and the politics of history are permeable, and that public debates can signifi-

83 Lacko, “Zápas o pamäť slovenského národa.”

84 Ďurica, *Slovenské dejiny a ich historiografia*, 20.

85 Mannová, “Slovenské národné povstanie a politická pamäť,” 229.

86 For example, the *Slovenské národné noviny* (*Slovak national newspaper*) published a text of the call *For the Common State* (1991) with the following comment: “Here is a list which shows even after twenty years that the names of many people you see on it, have unmistakably served each anti-Slovak and anti-state activity. [...] they made not one, but dozens of anti-Slovak acts which harm our country. In doing so, many served without hesitation and shame as top representatives of political, public and cultural life, basked in the sunshine of media unlike true patriots, they enjoyed the advantage from the state which they did not want and which they execrated from the beginning.” “Postavili Sa Proti Slovenskej štátnosti a Zatracovali Ju,” *Slovenské Národné Noviny*, June 25, 2012, <http://snn.sk/postavili-sa-proti-slovenskej-statnosti-a-zatracovali-ju-2>.

cantly impact the academic environment, not just in a sense of authority but also in terms of establishing a new discursive ground. The campaign to rehabilitate the state by a small group of local and especially émigré activists resulted in the collapse of their own legitimacy, as they discredited themselves professionally through selective reading of the evidence and their incompetent statements. It turns out, however, that many of the propositions presented by them have become integral and influential parts of Slovak public and expert forums. Thus, under the influence of successful institutionalization, memory became history.

CHAPTER

6

Victims and Traditions: Narratives of Hungarian National History After the Age of Extremes

Ferenc Laczó

The following chapter explores how the Holocaust of 1944 and the end of the communist revolutionary project in 1989 are constructed in terms of their contemporary relevance in Hungary to thereby discuss some key questions of historical explanation and narrative coherence in post-communist times. My focus will be on major trends, key disagreements, and recent changes in Holocaust remembrance and the meanings assigned to 1989. I shall conceive of Holocaust remembrance as intimately linked to the issue of historical responsibility,¹ whereas I shall treat the remembrance of 1989 as a crucial problem of historical orientation that also has a decisive political stake.

HUNGARIAN HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

Major Issues

In reaction to controversial social and political developments in recent years, most particularly a massive rightward shift, questions regarding

¹ Regarding the question of the special type of historical responsibility, see Tillmanns, *Was heißt historische Verantwortung*.

how Hungary has dealt with the role it had played during World War II and how far it has managed to confront its co-responsibility for the Holocaust have been raised with new urgency. It is therefore timely to ask what are the major dividing lines in Hungarian Holocaust remembrance, how have they evolved over time, and what do current trends look like? Second, in what ways are Hungarian patterns of remembrance intertwined with larger European and, more particularly, German ones, and where do they differ from them?

In relation to the Holocaust, three major questions have divided Hungarian public opinion since the end of World War II: the relative responsibility of Hungarians and Germans, the ideological explicability of Hungarian involvement focused on the problems of fascism and anti-Semitism, and the way the victims should be categorized and remembered. Fighting on the Axis side and being involved in the war on the Eastern front as a relatively independent actor,² Hungary had a clearly negative but also a somewhat mixed record long into the war years. After the first wave of deportations in the summer of 1941 and the Vojvodina *razzia* leading to mass murder in early 1942,³ the country started to cautiously distance itself from Nazi Germany in 1942–43 and refused requests to deport its large Jewish population.⁴ The Nazi occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944, however, resulted in heightened collaboration with the Holocaust being its most depressing illustration.⁵ A joint decision-making process of Germans and Hungarians led to the massive scale and unprecedented speed of deportations from Hungary. Moreover, the deportations of Hungarian Jews were chiefly implemented by other Hungarians up to the border town of Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia).⁶ This also implies that the large majority of Hungarian Jews were annihilated outside the borders of the country. According to estimates, 4–7 percent of the victims of the Hungarian Holocaust were murdered by their Hungarian neighbors and persecutors.⁷

2 On the Hungarian Army in World War II, see Ungváry, *A magyar honvédség*.

3 On these events, see Vági, Csósz, and Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, Chapter 2.

4 See Joó, *Kállay Miklós külpolitikája*.

5 See Vági, Csósz, and Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary*, Chapter 4.

6 On the interactive process of decision making, see Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*.

7 Gábor Kádár and Zoltán Vági interpret 1944 as the fatal meeting of two forces: the Nazi genocidal program and the Hungarian drive toward ethnic homogenization. See Kádár and Vági, *A végső döntés*, 13.

These basic historical facts seem worth rehearsing here because their juxtaposition indicates why such a broad spectrum of opinion on relative national responsibility could emerge in postwar Hungary. Particular narratives of the war and the origins of the Hungarian Holocaust have indeed widely differed in their emphases, from blaming the Germans in the interest of exonerating Hungarians to presenting an almost exclusively local (i.e., Hungarian) prehistory of persecution and annihilation.⁸ Ultimately, the disagreement seems to revolve around the following, rarely explicitly addressed questions: what kind of cause was the German occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944? Did it drastically alter Hungarian trajectories or merely catalyze existing tendencies?

It seems correct to argue that the German occupation did radically alter Hungarian behavior regarding the Holocaust and could thus be considered one of its primary causes. However, the resulting shift in Hungarian behavior was larger than what could be accounted for by reference to this external trigger. In other words, the German intervention, the starting point of the murder of the large majority of Hungarian Jewry in almost any narrative, would exert its immense impact precisely through the dramatic change of Hungarian behavior. Thus, German and Hungarian national responsibilities for the Holocaust in Hungary are intertwined in complex ways, leaving legitimate space for varying emphases. The exact share of Hungarian co-responsibility will thus in all likelihood continue to preoccupy the local public.

Next to the question of the forms and extent of national responsibility, the political ideological explanation and even the political ideological explicability of the Hungarian Holocaust have a long history of contestation. After the communist consolidation of power, an ideological story was being told with the history of the Holocaust embedded in a larger anti-fascist plot and often subsumed in it.⁹ Fascist movements

8 In a recent discussion of March 19, 1944, historians practically unanimously emphasised Hungarian responsibility for the Holocaust in Hungary but a broad spectrum of opinion on its main causes and concrete way of implementation was revealed. See my English-language summary of the debate: Laczó, "German Occupation or Hungarian Responsibility."

9 Even if prior to the consolidation of Stalinist rule in the late 1940s, Hungary was in the forefront of documenting the Holocaust *avant la lettre* and the Holocaust was certainly not completed taboored and silenced during the Kádár era either. On the letter, see Fritz, *Nach Krieg und Judenmord*.

and regimes were effectively pictured as a precondition for the implementation of genocide. There was too much ideological coherence to this communist story and so, when the *doyen* of Hungarian Holocaust historiography and one of the leading survivor historians worldwide, Randolph L. Braham published his standard two-volume synthesis in the early 1980s in which he implied that Hungary might have saved its Jewish population if it remained a loyal ally of Nazi Germany until the end of the war, historians from Hungary, including leading local expert György Ránki, contested his claim.¹⁰ Braham would reason that, even though the Holocaust was swiftly implemented upon the intervention of March 1944, Nazi Germany did not invade Hungary because of the presence of what was by then by far the largest Jewish community within its reach. He argued that the Nazis much rather invaded due to Hungary's decreasing commitment to the joint war efforts. What Braham thus posited was in effect an inverse causal relation between the country's Nazi alliance and the catastrophe of 1944. Such a differentiated explanation incorporating uncomfortable paradoxes was clearly at odds with the ideological coherence of the official communist version. As irreducible complexities and political-ideological ambiguities of Hungarian history during World War II were offered in the place of anti-fascist ideological and moral clarities, Braham's narrative was arguably bound to be controversial prior to 1989.

However, with the gradual decline of communist ideological control, mandatory anti-fascism gradually lost its influence within Hungary. This loss of influence practically coincided with the moment when the question what led to the deportation of Hungarian Jews could be more prominently posed. As a result of these parallel changes, the problem of explicability deepened. If the country did not have a fascist dictatorship during most of World War II and not quite during the deportations between May to July 1944, how and why was it so massively involved in persecuting its racially redefined Jewish population?¹¹

10 On this debate, see Kovács, "A magyar holokauszt és a történetészek."

11 As Rudolf Paksa argues, the successfully implemented German plan to occupy and pacify Hungary in the spring of 1944 brought experienced politicians to power. It may be true that many of them had been members of the national socialist formation of Béla Imrédy, but previously they had belonged to the governing party. Paksa, *Magyar nemzetiszocialisták*, 276–77.

These parallel changes in the historical culture of late communist and early post-communist Hungary resulted in the question of anti-Semitism acquiring much added importance, so much so that anti-Semitism emerged as one of the most heavily contested issues in Hungarian public life.¹² Even if much remains to be done, a substantial body of scholarship has already been published focusing on the history of Hungarian anti-Semitism.¹³ This newer wave of scholarship often focuses on the economic dimension of anti-Semitism,¹⁴ but also tends to critically assess the moot question whether the Hungarian history of discriminatory and exclusionary drives should be seen as the pre-history of the deportations.

The third contested issue in Hungarian Holocaust remembrance is also a matter of emphasis but is no less crucial for that: should the victims of the Holocaust in Hungary be identified as Hungarian Jewish, simply as Jews, or perhaps primarily as Hungarians? While the first option seems most accurate (after all, strategies of dual identification were clearly in a dominant position among Hungarian Jews), powerful narratives have been developed based on all three. Israeli commemorations of the Shoah would typically list Jewish victims from Hungary alongside Jewish victims from other European countries.¹⁵ On the other hand, mainstream Hungarian commemorative practices try to integrate the victims of what is regularly called the Hungarian Holocaust (*magyar holokauszt*) into the larger group of Hungarian victims. Often this takes the form of including Hungarian Jewish victims in the larger group of Hungarian victims of World War II whereby they are placed alongside those who died fighting on the Eastern Front. This often happens without sufficiently emphasizing the important differences between how they were murdered. No less controversially, the

¹² On this, see Laczó, "Antisemitism Contested."

¹³ For an intellectual history of anti-Semitism in Hungary, see Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, Chapter 8. On the implications of the much debated *numerus clausus* law of 1920, see Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva*. On anti-Semitism of the postwar period and the present epoch, see Kovács, *A másik szeme*; Kovács, *The Stranger at Hand*. In German, see Fischer, *Entwicklungsstufen des Antisemitismus in Ungarn, 1867–1939*.

¹⁴ See especially Kádár and Vági, *Hullarablás*; Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege*. In German, see Gerlach and Götz, *Das letzte Kapitel*.

¹⁵ On the Israeli memory of the Shoah, see Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*.

Holocaust in Hungary is often assigned a place in a series of “national traumas” with “Trianon” and the crimes of communism being recurrently evoked in the same breath.¹⁶

A Brief History of Interpretative Contests

Each of these three contests has an intriguing history of its own. Under communism, ideological explanations of history were required, the theory of fascism was an important legitimating tool and the German Nazis were held chiefly responsible. In other words, practices of largely externalizing guilt for the Holocaust in Hungary were developed and canonized.¹⁷ At the same time, the Jewishness of the victims was only sporadically mentioned. The blunt declaration of János Kádár in reaction to the Israeli capture of Adolf Eichmann in Argentina is highly suggestive of this approach: “It’s not a good idea to turn these awful fascist affairs into an exclusively Jewish question.”¹⁸

Around the time of the fall of communism in the late 1980s, important reassessments of all three issues were formulated. Beginning before 1989 but taking on greater force afterwards, previous ideological explanations were largely discredited, the Hungarian role in the implementation of the Holocaust would be discussed more frequently and openly, and the Jewishness of the victims received much added attention. All three of these developments may be assessed rather positively since they approximated past realities more closely while contributing to the emergence of a self-critical historical culture.

Nevertheless, nearly a quarter of a century after the end of communism, it appears that the transformation of Hungarian historical culture has proved rather partial. Regarding the Holocaust, even the aforementioned reassessments have given way to rather mixed blessings on the mid-term. Reactions were manifested in outright rejection

16 On the contemporary uses of Trianon, see Feischmidt et al., *Nemzet a mindennapokban*. For a critique of the trauma discourse concerning Trianon, see Kovács, “Trianon traumatikus emlékezetéről.”

17 This is one of the major theses of Fritz, *Nach Krieg und Judenmord*.

18 The discussion has appeared in English translation as “Minutes of the Politburo of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party, 28 June 1960” in Kovács and Miller, *Jewish Studies at the CEU, Vol. IV*.

of Hungarian responsibility, softer forms of historiographical revision, and novel practices of symbolic exclusion. They all took on additional force in the early twentieth century. Right-wing condemnations of communism accompanied the Europeanization of Holocaust remembrance in an uneasy manner.¹⁹ Nationalistic approaches to history have clearly cantered on Hungarian traumas and victimhood and tended to downplay the role of local perpetrators. As a consequence of these newer trends, national conservatively oriented members of the younger generations, including highly educated ones, have been particularly susceptible to softer forms of rejecting Hungarian co-responsibility for the Holocaust.²⁰

Critical discussions of the Hungarian road to the Holocaust focused on the continuities between the interwar establishment and the perpetrators of genocide were accompanied by more “balanced” and sometimes rather positive assessments of the interwar period and regime, especially the 1920s.²¹ In influential circles, the Horthy period was reconceived as a usable past for post-communism and was often presented as an important element of national continuity. In these more positive assessments the sustained anti-Semitic orientation of the regime would receive limited attention.²² The temporal coincidence of these two trends (i.e., the open exploration of the history of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in Hungary, on the one hand, and attempts to re-establish national continuities after a period of occupation and discontinuity, on the other) could only result in a sharp historiographical polemic.²³

If new forms of emphasizing Hungarian responsibility were followed by a wave of rejectionism and the role of the establishment in

19 Various observers have perceived the European memory landscape of the early twenty-first century to be characterized by ideologically motivated clashes and a relatively high degree of East-West polarization.

20 See Kovács, *The Stranger at Hand*.

21 For a positive assessment of István Bethlen, Prime Minister of Hungary between 1921 and 1931, see Romsics, *Bethlen István*. For the attempts at a new canonization of Bethlen, see Ablonczy et al., *Gróf Bethlen István és kora*.

22 For the lack of sustained attention to anti-Semitism, see the otherwise excellent collection on the history of the Hungarian right wing in the first half of the twentieth century: Romsics, *A magyar jobboldali hagyomány, 1900–1948*.

23 The sharp division characterizing Hungarian historical culture since 1989 has been explored, most recently, in Hanebrink, “The Memory of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Hungary.”

creating the pre-conditions for as well as in implementing the Hungarian Holocaust were accompanied by reinterpretations of elements of the period as a usable past, more recently, radical rightist forces have consciously attempted to exclude Holocaust victims from the Hungarian community of victims. According to their binary anti-Semitic logic, their Jewishness deprives them of their Hungarianness. All three of these reactions have gone much more public during the ongoing years of crisis. It is to be seen to what extent the ongoing seventieth anniversary-related wave of commemorations will prove effective in countering them.

Hungarian Holocaust Remembrance in its European Context

Two leading approaches to the study of recent history are the comparative and transnational. They may be alternative and even competing approaches but both prove fruitful when aiming to embed the history and remembrance of the Hungarian Holocaust in its European context. There is a striking difference between them though as they lead to alternative mappings. The comparative method would put Hungary alongside its neighboring countries such as Slovakia, Romania, or Croatia, all relatively independent actors actively involved in the war on the Axis side as well as in the implementation of the Holocaust.²⁴

On the other hand, the transnational approaches tend to focus attention on the Hungarian connections to Germany. This is due, on the one hand, to the historical ties between the two countries, including their joint war efforts and shared responsibilities in the twentieth century, but also to the significant change in the symbolic position of Germany that accompanied the widespread recent turn from history to memory. Whereas in early postwar decades Germany was a strongly stigmatized country precisely because of its recent past, in more recent ones Hungarian observers have often understood its memory culture to offer something close to a model: the propagators of a self-critical

²⁴ On Romania, see Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania*. On Croatia, see the much discussed book: Korb, *Im Schatten des Weltkriegs*. On Hungary and Romania, see Case, *Between States*.

turn have repeatedly evoked the German example of a supposedly successful confrontation with an abominable recent past, especially when it came to the treatment of the Holocaust.²⁵

Not only has the symbolic position of Germany changed since 1989, our understanding of Holocaust perpetrators has also evolved and its scope greatly expanded. For decades it was mainstream practice to depict perpetrators as a relatively small group of Nazi political leaders. Since the 1990s several waves of revelations have pointed to the widespread involvement of German institutions and ordinary German citizens in the crimes of the Third Reich.²⁶ This novel perception of the deep social roots and shockingly wide popularity of Nazism has been increasingly accompanied by a certain Europeanization of the image of Holocaust perpetrators. The evident focus on German perpetrators has now been complemented by an emphasis on the direct criminal responsibility of large numbers across the continent.²⁷

Thus, around the turn of the millennium, when commemorating the Holocaust in an appropriate manner emerged as a historical cultural entry ticket to the European Union (EU), the broader conception of perpetrator groups made confrontation with local responsibility an international pattern from France to Poland. How much a more profound confrontation with societal involvement was locally desired and effectively fostered greatly varied though. On the one hand, Hungary has received and adapted ritualistic forms of commemorating Holocaust victims. In this respect, it does not strongly differ from the mainstream European pattern. On the other, as the three reactions described above show, the sense of historical responsibility that characterizes societies earnestly confronting crimes of their recent pasts remain only moderately developed. Without earnest and widespread attention to Hungarian perpetrators, their individual biographies, patterns of socialization, forms of criminal participation as well as postwar strategies of evasion and apologetics, the gap between Hungarian knowledge levels and personal attitudes toward the Holocaust observable in recent years might even deepen.

25 See especially György, *Apám helyett*.

26 Perhaps the classic work in this regard is Browning, *Ordinary Men*.

27 In the case of Poland, see Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*.

1989 AND PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY ON THE RUINS OF PROGRESS

*Progressive Temporality, Revolutionary Narratives,
and the End of Communism*

One of the defining characteristics of modernity is its specific temporal structure. As shown by Reinhart Koselleck, among others, modern temporal constructions related past, present, and future in novel ways and implied that the future would no longer resemble the past.²⁸ According to the modern conception of time, the future was not only unknown and open-ended but was also assumed to be superior to the past. In modernity, change could thus not only be justified by drawing on previous experiences or traditional authorities but also by referring to the idea of progress. Since history was meant to bring about improvements, the future could emerge as a legitimating tool in politics and progressives would now make interventions to accelerate the unfolding of time.

In terms of their dominant temporal mode, communist regimes were perhaps the most modern of all. Communists were not only explicitly committed to an agenda of abolishing the past but justified their practices with references to a utopian future society. In other words, communist regimes made the gap between past and future that characterizes modernity grow as wide as possible. But communists have not only taken the temporal construction of modernity to its extremes, they have also inscribed their political project into influential narratives of modern history. Their narratives on the rise of European modernity and the progressive unfolding of history have emphasized the positive catalyzing role of revolutions and tended to maintain that the French Revolution practically gave birth to political modernity.²⁹ They thus developed a curious hybrid of historicist utopianism.

According to such progressivist perspectives, revolutions represented condensed epochal clashes. As such, they may not have been entirely laudable events. However, what truly mattered about them was that

28 Koselleck, *Futures Past*. On these issues, more broadly, see Lorenz and Bevernage, *Breaking Up Time*.

29 On the radicalization of European revolutionary practices, see Malia, *History's Locomotives*.

their long-term impacts were beneficial. In other words, at the dawn of political modernity, revolution was reconceptualized to no longer stand for a return to a more pristine previous state (which would now rather be called restoration). Instead, it started to signify an event bringing about change in a new direction.

During the twentieth century, such a progressivist understanding of revolution found its most radical expression in the official interpretations of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Soviet Union continued to depict revolution as the chief means of historical progress as it institutionalized curious hybrids of revolution as regime in one-third of the world. In short, it seems worth viewing European modernity, the idea of progress, and the beneficial impact of revolutions as mutually supportive constructions with the communist project in the twentieth century offering perhaps *the* crucial example of such a co-constitution.

From such a perspective, it appears unsurprising that the fall of communism has created significant problems for revolutionary narratives of modern European history. It therefore deserved to be explored what happened to the idea of progress, the image of modernity and the modern European revolutionary tradition once the communist revolutionary project imploded. I wish to tackle this conundrum by analyzing three interrelated questions: the place the communist revolution has been assigned in the story of European modernity, the debate concerning the character of 1989 and, last but not least, the wider contribution of the end of communism and the subsequent European integration of formerly communist East Central European countries made to the rethinking of modernity, progress, and revolutions.

According to the Bolshevik understanding, revolutions substantially furthered modern history by launching its epochs. Modern history was essentially understood as a story of the unfolding and achievements of revolutions but also the (supposedly, necessarily temporary) setbacks they encountered. According to this perspective, revolutions represented beneficial ruptures in local histories but could simultaneously continue previous revolutions that took place elsewhere. Thus, the absolute revolutionary spirit, to paraphrase Hegel, could be manifested in France in the late eighteenth century and could move to Russia by 1917. In short, the Bolsheviks presented themselves as heirs to

the European revolutionary tradition with their key reference points being the French Revolution and the Jacobins.

When communist dictatorships were consolidated in East Central Europe in the late 1940s, this happened to coincide with the centenary of 1848, the first transnational wave of modern revolutions in Europe. Hungarian communist leaders indeed made a huge investment in picturing themselves as legitimate successors of the 1848ers whom they viewed as progressive bourgeois revolutionaries.³⁰ They also imagined themselves as substantially furthering progressive revolutions in their own time by launching the next and ultimate stage, that of the proletarian revolution.

According to the Stalinist vulgate they would soon impose, the entire history of mankind was a struggle between progressive and reactionary forces, between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary tendencies.³¹ In accordance with this script, when Hungarian communists managed to reassert their rule in 1956 through the intervention of the Red Army, they soon came to declare that the uprising directed against them was of a counter-revolutionary nature.³² They aimed to link its leading participants to the self-confessed counter-revolutionaries of 1919 and even to the Hungarian Nazis of 1944–45.

It is important to recall that according to the canonical communist interpretation, 1944–45 was not only the lowest point but also the last moment of counter-revolutionary history upon which the communist takeover followed almost immediately and irreversibly. To employ concepts from religion, the apocalypse may not have been averted during World War II but the salvation of Hungarian society could soon be assured. 1956 was thus pictured as the momentary return of an already defeated past. This Manichean progressivist-revolutionary vision was the only officially acceptable one in Hungary into the 1960s and remained in a dominant position up until 1989.

³⁰ On this period, see Mevius, *Agents of Moscow*. On the contested interpretations of 1919, see Apor, *Fabricating Authenticity in Soviet Hungary*.

³¹ One of the most influential intellectual expressions of this was Lukács, *Az ész trónfosztása*. The book originally appeared in German in 1954.

³² The debate on this question is explored in Kalmár, *Ennivaló és hozomány*.

At the same time, it is certainly not only since Eric Hobsbawm labeled the period 1914–45 the age of catastrophe in his 1994 book *The Age of Extremes* that our sense of historical progress has been complemented by increased awareness of the “dark sides” of modernity.³³ It is one of the most fundamental changes of approximately the last four decades that historical cultures no longer focus primarily on heroes, achievements, and successes but devote ample attention to crimes and its victims, their suffering, and trauma. To express it differently, progressivist considerations on history have been challenged by ethical agendas.³⁴ Revolution may have served as one of dominant political myths of the last century but, as Samuel Moyn has persuasively argued in his *The Last Utopia*, in more recent decades the human rights movement has managed to achieve prominence precisely on the ruins of such discredited utopias.³⁵

A key illustration of what a shift from revolutionary progressivism to a concern for human rights means in practice must suffice here. The idea that Bolshevism continued the project of the Jacobins was originally meant to provide the October revolution with legitimacy on the left.³⁶ The logic of this argument seems to have gotten reversed in more recent decades: the thorough discrediting of the communist project, for which the Gulag emerged as the chief symbol, would now largely discredit the radical political program of the French Revolution.³⁷ In influential new narratives, such as François Furet’s or Simon Schama’s, the French Revolution no longer stood for the origins and promises of political modernity.³⁸ In accordance with the new discourse on human rights,³⁹ the French Revolution would increasingly often be reduced to its violent unfolding and would at times be wholly identified with the phase of terror.⁴⁰

33 See Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*.

34 This is most succinctly expressed in the title of Bourq, *From Revolution to Ethics*.

35 Moyn, *The Last Utopia*.

36 See Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*.

37 Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*.

38 Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*; Schama, *Citizens*.

39 On the human rights revolution of the 1970s, see Eckel and Moyn, *Moral für die Welt*. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*.

40 See Rév, “The Virtue of Not Inventing Anything.”

In light of the revolutionary project awfully going astray in the twentieth century, post-communist liberals would prefer to return to the period 1789–91 while condemning what followed. In a more consistent but also much more radical manner, post-communist conservatives are likely to critique the entire revolutionary process that gave birth to political modernity. It thus seems that changing assessments of the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution have played a central role in how the revolutionary founding moment of modern European history has been reinterpreted. While affirmative perspectives on the communist experiment used to generate hope in progressive circles into the 1970s, its radically negative current assessments have contributed to a brusque questioning of progressivism and the project of modernity.

ON THE CHARACTER OF 1989 AND A NEW PLACE IN TIME

How do 1989 and its consequences appear in light of the modern revolutionary tradition? As mentioned above, the most recent epochal transformation in Europe took place against communist regimes that not only claimed to be the outcome of progressive historical development but instituted revolutionary practices in the shape of dictatorial regimes. Accordingly, one contested point since the end of communism has been whether the fall of these new types of revolutionary regimes should itself be conceived as revolutionary, or whether 1989 rather resembled a restoration, spinning the wheel of history to a previous state according to the pre-modern meaning of revolution. Could the promises of political modernity finally be fulfilled in post-communist Eastern Europe through liberal guarantees, as some have argued, or was 1989 rather a turn against progressivism and revolutionary hubris that launched political modernity, as others have insisted? In other words, did 1989 provide a non-communist and liberal, or an anti-communist and conservative fundament for the post-communist regimes?⁴¹

⁴¹ The “anti-anti-communist” turn of Hungarian post-dissident liberals is discussed in Laczó, “From ‘Liberal Minimum’ to the ‘Complete Catalog of Human Rights.’”

Influential contemporary Western observers of 1989 such as Jürgen Habermas or Ralf Dahrendorf tended to celebrate the end of communism while discussing the wider contribution of countries just liberated from such revolutionary regimes in a rather dismissive manner.⁴² They essentially argued that the end of communism brought nothing really new. They complained that no new institutions were created, no new legitimating ideas emerged, and consequently no new projects for the remaking of society were launched. All of this may be true but it arguably misses a key point: 1989 was precisely meant to put an end to the revolutionary logic of modern history by instituting representative democracy and the rule of law in a peaceful manner. As István Rév recently put it, one of the chief virtues of 1989 lay in abandoning the ambition to invent something new, except for a new non-revolutionary method of revolutionary change.⁴³

In Poland and Hungary, the first two countries to exit communism in 1989, a central assertion was that a compromise with the revolutionary-dictatorial establishment was not only possible but also beneficial. While 1989 had different meanings in different countries in this regard too, these two countries in particular experienced a non-communist and not an anti-communist end to the communist revolutionary project. As a consequence of the non-communist end of communism, even if liberals did not quite acquire dominant political positions in East Central Europe after 1989, they at first managed to shape the horizons of expectations more than any other political-ideological force.

Shortly after 1989 it appeared that, in spite of the new kinds of dictatorships and immense human catastrophes characterizing the short twentieth century, history could also be convincingly explained in a liberal key. Since liberals could argue that the recent past was defined by illiberal extremes, they could claim to possess a privileged viewpoint to draw its lessons. In the 1990s even the concept of totalitarianism was primarily used as a counter-concept to liberal democracy.

As already shown above through the example of Holocaust remembrance, such critical forms of historical consciousness that aimed

42 Habermas, *Die nachholende Revolution*. Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*.

43 Rév, "The Virtue of Not Inventing Anything."

to commemorate human catastrophes while creating distance from the past have not become central to the historical cultures of post-communist countries on the mid-term. By the early twenty-first century, partly through the increased attraction of concepts such as national memory and identity, identification with victim groups and mobilization in the name of an unfinished anti-communist agenda became widely influential. As James Mark has perceptively argued, the velvet exits from communism have actually strengthened the sense of unfinished revolutions over time.⁴⁴ The ambition to confront the human catastrophes of the recent past thus no longer fosters liberal democratic conclusions but often results in anti-progressivist political and cultural discourses.

The attitude of new conservatives to revolution after communism is thoroughly ambivalent. From their point of view, the revolutionaries have to be thoroughly defeated, but at least according to some of them, this might require an ultimate confrontation, a *nachholende Revolution* after post-communism.⁴⁵ Such new forms of rightist anti-communism with their ambivalent attitude to revolution are heavily contested politically, but since modern history no longer has a clear teleology, it is not clear whether their new anti-communism is a revolutionary or rather a counter-revolutionary program, a progressive or a reactionary phenomenon. Does it push beyond post-communism, as its supporters maintain, or does it restore pre-communism, as its critics warn?

The polarization between liberals and conservatives thus seem to have much to do with basic uncertainties concerning the retrospective understanding of the communist experience. Was communism a major detour from the modern normative path of democratization, as the liberals are likely to maintain? Was communism a complete lie about itself that tells us little, if anything, about the true potential of revolutionary transformation, as some leftists would still argue? Or was it

⁴⁴ Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*.

⁴⁵ This issue was raised in Láncki, *Konzervatív kiáltvány*. One of the most vocal proponents of a conservative revolution in Hungary has been Márton Békés. See Békés, *A hagyomány forradalma*. Remarkably, Békés uses the term counter-revolution affirmatively. See Békés, *Amerikai neokonzervativizmus*.

perhaps a revelation of the catastrophic nature of modern progressive and revolutionary politics, as conservatives would have it?

The question continues to be heavily debated but the strength of various positions have changed. Whereas leftist thought is still largely marginalized after its decades-long dictatorial enforcement, liberals also seem to have lost significant parts of their influence. Since the transition was declared over and institutional Europeanization was completed, but only a few of its promised benefits materialized, the master narrative of Europeanization through modernization and modernization through Europeanization was no longer broadly convincing. It was in this particular situation of the early twenty-first century that conservative interpretations managed to acquire increased influence.

As the case of Hungary probably illustrates better than any other EU member state right now, conservatives have gradually acquired the upper hand in the contest over the meaning of 1989. It may well be that the non-revolutionary revolution of 1989 was chiefly brought about by liberals, but non-communism has largely been replaced by the stark anti-communism of post-communist generations on the mid-term.

THE LESSONS OF COMMUNISM AND EUROPEAN ENLARGEMENT

What have the practices, crimes, and failures of communist revolutionary regimes implied for the teleology of modern history on the European level and how have ex-communist countries contributed to larger discussions in this regard? The postwar Western European consensus was an anti-fascist one fairly concerned about the dictatorial uses of anti-fascist mobilization under communist rule.⁴⁶ Even though similarities between “totalitarian,” that is, fascist and communist, regimes were repeatedly evoked in Western Europe during the cold war, the realist sense of a European balance of power and the relative deradicalization of communist regimes would gradually normalize relations between the blocs. In the context of bloc coexistence, attention devoted to Axis crimes committed during World War II could not be

⁴⁶ Dan Stone assigns a central place to anti-fascism in postwar European politics: Stone, *Goodbye to All That*.

matched by an equally nuanced exploration of Stalinism—while communist regimes also hindered the thorough exploration of the former. What is more, in spite of the human catastrophes of the first half of the twentieth century, a progressive reading of modern European history would continue to flourish on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the early decades of the postwar period.

It seems to me that in recent years, Europe has witnessed a gradual eastward shift of the symbolic focal point of its recent history. When the most significant historical developments of the last century are discussed nowadays, the laudable self-critical West German impetus that somewhat misfortunately dampened serious comparisons between Nazism and Stalinism is no longer decisively important.⁴⁷ If the observation was correct and the symbolic center had indeed moved eastward to a once multi-ethnic zone of multiple catastrophes, then the theory of two in many respects similar though not identical regimes starts to make sense and could now be pictured as a defining European experience.⁴⁸ With the entry of formerly communist states into the EU, it has indeed become more widely accepted that the revolutionary left and the counter-revolutionary right has become responsible for different but equally condemnable crimes.

In influential East Central European national conservative circles, a marked interest has emerged to portray regional history as centrally important to understanding the European experience of the twentieth century. Whereas such attempts tend to present Nazism and communism as evil twins, East Central Europe may appear here as the victim of two most vicious imperial projects. Guilt can thereby be largely externalized, which is especially problematic in countries, such as Hungary, that were allied to Nazi Germany as relatively independent actors in World War II and share co-responsibility with it for the implementation of the Holocaust.

Somewhat polemically put, the European integration of East Central European countries and their ambition to exert continent-wide influence, together with the practical self-exclusion of Russia from Euro-

⁴⁷ See Augstein, *Historikerstreit*.

⁴⁸ This is perhaps the most important purchase of the much debated book *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin* by Timothy Snyder.

pean discussion, brought about the kind of perspective national conservatives had wished for. Totalitarianism as a conservative key concept has thus not only become central to the interpretations of recent history in East Central Europe but could also make a major comeback on the European level. The eastward shift of the symbolic center of European history in the early twentieth-first century has thus not only challenged the previously reigning anti-fascist consensus but, more generally, all progressivist interpretations of modern European history.

CONCLUSION

In my contribution I have argued that three major questions have divided Hungarian public opinion in relation to the Holocaust: the relative responsibility of Hungarians and Germans, the ideological explicability of Hungarian involvement focused on the problems of fascism and anti-Semitism, and the way the victims should be categorized and remembered. I have aimed to show that once the ideological coherence of the communist master narrative was undermined, the problem of explicability deepened. The interpretation of the Holocaust in Hungary and its place in the new national canon became contested issues. New forms of recognizing Hungarian responsibility were followed by softer as well as more explicit rejectionisms, and the role of the establishment in creating the pre-conditions for as well as implementing the Hungarian Holocaust were accompanied by reinterpretations of elements of the interwar period as a usable past. The sense of historical responsibility characterizing societies that have earnestly confronted crimes of their recent pasts has clearly grown but remains rather moderately developed—the marked focus on the victims has proven largely insufficient without adequate attention to perpetrators.

In the second part of the chapter I have shown that communists aimed to integrate their story into the modern European history of revolutions and were keen to picture the French revolutionaries as their precursors. This connection was presented affirmatively but since the 1970s and 1980s, it was reconceived as a negative one, leading to thorough critiques of the modern revolutionary project. While 1989 were thus non-revolutionary revolutions, non-communist events that estab-

lished new liberal regimes, anti-liberals have subsequently managed to mobilize by referring to the unfinished nature of anti-communist revolutions. The rise of new anti-communism happened practically simultaneously with the European integration of East Central Europe. In the early years of the twenty-first century, East Central European conservatives have largely succeeded at exerting influence on the European level through employing the concept of totalitarianism and making use of the newly popular discourses on national memory and identity.

I have also argued that the attitude of Hungarian conservatives to revolution after communism is thoroughly ambivalent. From their point of view, the revolutionaries have to be thoroughly defeated, but this might require an “ultimate confrontation,” a *nachholende Revolution* after post-communism. Since modern history no longer has a clear teleology, it is not clear whether this new form of anti-communism is a revolutionary or rather a counter-revolutionary program, a progressive or a reactionary phenomenon. Does it aim to push beyond post-communism, as its supporters have maintained, or does it aim to restore pre-communism, as its critics have warned?

It seems to me that both perspectives lead to self-contradiction: the liberals claim that a backward step was taken in history without being able or even wanting to account for its deeper causes, whereas conservatives argue dialectically about conservative anti-communism following liberal non-communism, even though they do not accept such dialectics. Thus, 1989 brought upon not only a decline of the promises of modernity but also a sustained temporal confusion that continues to disable narrative coherence and the emergence of a convincing master narrative. The answer to the question whether the modern history of East Central Europe can still be convincingly told in a progressivist key after the end of the communist revolutionary experiment of the twentieth century currently has to be closer to a “no”—even though whether the end of communism has really been the end of all future-oriented revolutions, only the future can tell.

CHAPTER

7

Instrumentalization of History in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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INTRODUCTION

Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its sovereignty and independence in 1992. This act followed the collapse of socialism and subsequent disintegration of the Yugoslav federation, whose federal units have since become independent states. Since a part of its citizens, primarily Serbian political representatives, opposed the proclamation of Bosnia's independence on both political and interpretative levels, the newly-established state found itself under aggression from Serbia and Montenegro. The four-year armed conflict was brought to an end with the international peace conference in Dayton, Ohio in 1995, where the new state constitution was proposed.

Political and military developments led to a profoundly negative transformation of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian reality. In Bosnia the democratic transition through which all post-socialist countries in the region had passed was disrupted by a number of factors. The setting up of democratic political institutions, ideological decontamination and ownership transformation were accompanied by the emergence of a new ideology, ideology of nationalism. The new state constitution was based on an ethnic rather than a citizenship principle, it conduced to the institutionalization and legitimization of nationalisms of the constituent peoples—Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. The

newly-established common state comprised of a single district (Brčko), two entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska), and society, divided along ethnic lines. Nationalisms became the disintegrating ideologies fostered by the ethnic communities, combined with the related concepts of national culture, tradition, and history.

It was under these political conditions that the Dayton Peace Accord, regardless of all its shortcomings, confirmed the Bosnian and Herzegovinian state subjectivity. Now, in time of peace, continued attempts at consolidating and affirming this statehood seek further historical justification and modern articulation. The aforementioned process is compounded by the fact that each of the three ethnic groups has in many regards a different attitude toward the newly-established state independence defended by war and, hence, a different national projection and interpretation of its own national history, as well as the common history or the history of the common state. After the war, each group began to claim scientific legitimacy of their current or projected political position within the state, converting historical science into an instrument of national politics. This created room for the scholarly pursuit of new studies, interpretations, reconstructions, and re-evaluations of history, but also for imagination, fabrication, and ideology.

During this process, all national groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina acted differently, depending on their newly-established ideologies and positions in the state. Parts of Serbian and Croatian ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina—and this fact is crucial to the understanding of this text, as it will mainly deal with the Bosniak problem—began a full process of national, identity, and cultural integration into their home nations in Croatia and Serbia, respectively. In both cases, national integration on identity and ideological bases became the historical task in which the local, Bosnian and Herzegovinian identity traits of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats were generally ignored in favor of the common national characteristics, determined in what they perceived as their national centers. The political and identity orientation of Bosnian Croats toward Zagreb and of Bosnian Serbs toward Belgrade also implied their cooperation—albeit by no means on an equal basis—and subjugation to the cultural and scientific trends

of their respective national centers. In establishing their identity affiliation, this part of the population experienced a major shift in the emotional center from Bosnia and Herzegovina, first to their own nations and then to their home countries, Croatia and Serbia, respectively. This subsequently led to the interpretative deconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina and exclusively mononational interpretations of contemporary developments, all in congruence with integrating national ideologies.

These rather generalized observations provide a necessary framework to understand the current equalisation of the Bosniak and Bosnian and Herzegovinian positions, which will be at the center of our interest here. Namely, as the most ardent defenders of Bosnian and Herzegovinian statehood in the most recent war, the Bosniaks became, more than any other people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the bearers and advocates of proto-state activities. The construction of a nation-building consciousness also entailed a process of searching for the deepest possible historical roots of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian state and the Bosniak nation. This, in turn, also facilitated a more intensive incorporation of historical memory into the national movement.

Another observation, crucial for understanding the currents and agents of instrumentalizing history in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is that the instrumentalization of history was guided and used by political rather than intellectual elites to justify their present positions. The aforementioned process was also highly specific from area to area, especially in relation to Serbia and Croatia. Namely, the fact that after declaring its independence, Bosnia and Herzegovina entered a long and exhausting war, fully determined both the state and its people, as well as completely preoccupied the minds, interests and dispositions of all its public actors. Therefore, themes concerned with national reconciliation—those that prevail in the ideological conflicts between the Croatian and Serbian political and intellectual communities—and themes relating to World War II, the socialist period, and lustration, have largely remained peripheral in Bosnia and Herzegovina. History simply surpassed them, loading the agenda with new contents, questions, and issues. Themes that were common to other nations and communities were marginalized by new developments, thus never allowing

to become an essential instrument in the pluralization and democratization of the new society or the formation of its identity.

The period of socialism, which in Bosnia and Herzegovina made itself felt as the “hard” ideological version, managed to completely eschew any critical scholarly and broader political scrutiny. The negative post-Dayton and postwar implications, for example, the division of territory, the destruction of industry and working class, general impoverishment, nationalism, corruption, and the politicization of religion occupied the center of contemporaries’ attention, placing such a heavy burden on their consciousness and very existence that the majority now looks back on the socialist period as the golden age in the life of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Socialist collectiveness, social security and equality among the peoples and citizens, obtained in the period of socialism, are now portrayed as a negative utopia, a paradigmatic, ideal state that should be won anew. Therefore, the absence of critical and analytical arguments regarding this period owes much to the belief that life in socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina was better than it is today on the one hand and to the overwhelming scale of more pressing problems on the other.

This is the frame of mind in which we should seek the reasons as to why the post-Dayton populist political parties have not, despite their majority, been able to pass the law on lustration. The parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina has raised the question of lustration on several occasions, but to no avail: the Draft Law on Additional Conditions for Performing Public Services (as the official title of the draft law on lustration reads) remained in the form of a draft and was never proposed for the parliamentary procedure due to the lack of consensus. Within the public sphere, the aforementioned issue was especially confronted by the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (IZ BiH), following the publication of the book *Čuvvari Jugoslavije* [Guardians of Yugoslavia]. The aforementioned work contained a list of officials of religious communities, including the IZ BiH, who collaborated with the Yugoslav State Security Service.¹ The IZ BiH was the only listed religious institution to have publicly reacted to the book.

¹ See Bešlić, *Čuvvari Jugoslavije*.

Not only was there indisputable proof that they had worked for the secret communist police, the Rijaset of the IZ BiH as the supreme body of the aforementioned religious institution also provided these persons with amnesty, which triggered negative reactions and opposition from one part of the Muslim community.² To protect the unity of the IZ BiH, the reason cited for the amnesty was the totalitarian nature of communism, its aggressive atheism, and the use of torture against people as well as imams. In any event, it is highly significant that the aforementioned religious community has, just as other parts of society, never been really comfortable looking back on its communist past.

THE PAST AS A MEANS OF LEGITIMIZING THE FUTURE

The Bosniaks have to date practically made no conceptual use of history in the construction of their collective identity. They also could not, and have not, to date used history as a tool of the deliberate construction of national self-image for sheer lack of research or disregard of some of its parts. It should be borne in mind that during some periods of modern times when they did not have the right to their own nation state (in 1967 the communists recognized them as a nationality under the term Muslims), the Bosniaks did not even have the right to their own history, only to the common one, and the shared historical achievements accomplished in the two Yugoslav periods were laden with the ideological purpose of targeted socialization. The situation remained unchanged for almost the entire twentieth century, until the Bosniaks were finally able to obtain their first general national history in 1997.³

It is primarily owing to the fact that they do not have their own national historical narrative, written by their own intellectuals, that the Bosniaks have also been unable to develop their own alternative historical account, as most other Yugoslav nations have done in terms of anti-communism. National history finally took on political meaning after the promising end of socialism, the democratization of society

2 See, in particular, Spahić, "Zašto reis neda na udbaše?"

3 Imamović, *Historija Bošnjaka*.

and political pluralism, through which the ideology of class was gradually replaced with the ideology of nation. It was through this process that national history became meaningful. National history speaks of the common origin and the common destiny of a group of people, on the basis of which national politics invokes the primordial ties and justifies the present territorial claims. In regard to the ongoing Bosniak—as well as Macedonian—ethnogenesis, it is not a case of manipulated or contrived processes, nor is it a case of nations invented by the communists, as was once maintained by some circles. What we are dealing with here are the processes that “do not significantly differ from those experienced by other nations, the building of which has to some extent remained hidden from us due to historical distance.”⁴ Just as may be said of other nations in the region, the Bosniak and Macedonian ethnogeneses, too, are the result of a conscious effort. Nations simply “awaken” by symbolically constructing the continuity between their modernity and ash-covered “golden age.” Bosniak historical consciousness thus establishes itself through appropriating the medieval history of the Bosnian kingdom. In doing so, the Bosniaks, like the neighboring nations, recognize history as an instrument of establishing national unity, so that their projected memory only retains what can serve the purpose of achieving their current national goals.

The second reason for the previously virtually non-existent conceptual use of history in constructing Bosniak collective consciousness, and hence instrumentalization of history, is the predominantly negative portrayals of the Bosniaks in Serbian, Croatian, and Yugoslav historiographies: sometimes they were portrayed as parts of their own respective nations; at other times as Turks or the successors of the Ottoman Empire; and on other occasions, as bare objects rather than acknowledged subjects of history. This is why Bosniak identity was, unlike Serbian, for example, “to a lesser extent defined by collective memory of the victims or the past as such and to a greater extent based on diffused and implicit notions of a common religion and cultural tradition.”⁵ Now, the situation is changing. The past is being combed

4 Zdravković, *Politika žrtve na Kosovu*, 90.

5 For further details, see Duijzings, “Commemorating Srebrenica,” 147.

through for events and experiences that can serve as characteristics of identity or be established as the foundations of a common memory. Since historical consciousness could not catch up with the speed of political developments in the Bosniak past (struggles), it had to retrospectively legitimize the nation as a fully constituted political subject. History has been largely, although by no means in its entirety, converted into an instrument of politics. Transforming education into the knowledge of identity is a characteristic shared by all three ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶

The newly-established Bosnian and Herzegovinian statehood seeks to affirm its legitimacy by referring to the medieval Bosnian kingdom. In interpretative terms, the Bosniak nation as the most resolute defender and advocate of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian statehood is starting to attach its recently developed historical consciousness to the medieval Bosnian state, and interpret the Islamisation process, which followed the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in 1463, by linking Islam to the previous spiritual substrate of the Bosnian Church.⁷ This is a deliberate attempt to stop presenting the Ottoman period of the Bosnian past as the formative period of Bosniak cultural singularity.⁸ In the case of the Bosniaks, too, setting the historical foundations of a nation—the older they are, the older and more authentic the nation—has become, first and foremost, a national-political task and only then an academic necessity. Indeed, the memory of medieval Bosnian statehood has never died in Bosniak political culture. At every crucial moment of their political activity in the twentieth century, the Bosniaks referred to the old glory and old rights arising from the factual exis-

6 For more on the relationship between education, history and identity, see Asman, *Rad na nacionalnom pamćenju*.

7 This current of interpretation, prevalent among the Bosniaks, has found a most fierce opponent in historian Dubravko Lovrenović. For further detail, see Lovrenović, *Povijest est magistra vitae*.

8 The truth is that many Bosniak scholars have dealt with this period of history and produced important results, not only because this period has been largely associated with the social and cultural differentiation of the distinct Muslim nationality, but also because Bosniak scholars possess the best knowledge of Oriental languages in which these historical sources were produced. See Kapidžić, *Hercegovački ustanak 1882. godine*; Kreševljaković, *Kapetanije u Bosni i Hercegovini*; Sućeska-Ajani, *Prilog izučavanju lokalne vlasti u našim krajevima za vrijeme Turske*; Filipović, *Princ Musa i šejh Bedreddin*; Filipović, *Islamizacija u Bosni i Hercegovini*; Handžić, *Tuzla i njena okolina u XVI vijeku*.

tence of the Bosnian royal statehood, which they now use as the starting point and a blueprint for the fulfillment of their political program.⁹

Bosniak scholars who specialize in pre-Ottoman Bosnian history cannot be said to advocate the thesis of the Bosniaks as the fundamental people, superior and more entitled than the Bosnian Serbs and Croats.¹⁰ During the war against Bosnia and Herzegovina of 1992–95, the three constituent ethnic groups adopted different attitudes toward their country, and from this basis stems the present political fundamentalization of the Bosniak attitude toward Bosnia and its history. The fact is that during the war, the Bosniaks were in principle the only people to defend Bosnian statehood and independence, while the Bosnian Serbs and Croats fought most military and political fronts to either destroy this independence by incorporating parts of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Serbia and Croatia, respectively, or to establish their own nation-states within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is not to say that the Bosniaks were the only people to defend the state, but they were, without question, the predominant one. Such perception has gained ground and, by itself, led many Bosniaks to believe that they were the sole guardians of Bosnia. At the same time, we may agree with the observation made by the Croatian historian Srećko Džaja that the sudden surge in the thematization of Bogomilism among the Bosniaks was inspired not so much by scholarly interests as by the tendency “to infuse their present identity with the longest possible temporal dimension, thus protecting it from the Serbian and Croatian contestation and simultaneously leaving the strongest and most lasting Bosniak mark on Bosnia.”¹¹

9 Invocations of Bosnian millennial independence, statehood, and autonomy as the basis of present-day Bosnian and Herzegovinian special rights may be found in the “Memorandum of the United Muslim Organization,” which Šerif Arnautović submitted to the Austro-Hungarian Emperor on the eve of the creation of the First Yugoslavia. They may also be found in the studies conducted during World War II by Muhamed Hadžijahić, Ismet Gavrankapetanović and the National Salvation Committee for international readership, and finally, in petitions submitted by Husaga Čišić to the Ministry of the Constituent Assembly and Parliamentary Affairs on the drawing of the first Constitution of FNRJ 1946. For more on this subject, see Filandra, “Bošnjačko kraljevstvo u savremenoj bošnjačkoj politici,” 12–15.

10 Assertions that Bosniak historians advocate the thesis on the Bosniaks as a fundamental Bosnian-Herzegovinian people are presented by Srećko Džaja. See Džaja, “Tri kulturno-političke sastavnice Bosne i Hercegovine,” 147.

11 *Ibid.*, 149.

Indeed, through the suddenly revived and politically motivated interest in Bosnian Christians, the Bosniaks have sought to achieve a status that will be on par with the Catholic and Orthodox communities in the traditional Bosnia.

Bosniak scholars failed to adequately thematize medieval Bosnia in the early modern era. Serbian and Croatian historians, on the other hand, have been contesting the character of the Bosnian Church and hence the state for over a century, most often through the prisms of their respective greater national interests. Declaring the Bosnian Church as Catholic and Orthodox, respectively, they legitimized the purported historical rights of Serbs in Serbia and Croats in Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina. War and postwar historiographical works in Bosnia and Herzegovina on medieval Bosnia are pervaded with war themes and often suffused with different ideological presumptions, whereas research results “are, for the most part, inferior to the basic findings of earlier periods.”¹² The essential characteristic of discussing medieval issues is that they are now breaking through the narrow academic confines, becoming the subject of general public interest, and discussed on a daily basis from primarily national-political perspectives.

The actualization of long historical memory has been to some degree manifested in the awareness of the political necessity to stress the continuity of the Bosniak presence in Bosnia, but also, and more importantly, in the possibility to now give this historical presence full expression. However, in this case, too, the deliberate construction of historical consciousness has, more than anything, proved to be of reactive nature, an anachronism, falling a whole century behind the Serbian and Croatian thematizations of these phenomena. Bosniak researchers assumed the role of revivalists rather than revisionists, reviving old theories of the past that are now considered obsolete and inapplicable by most scholars.¹³ Such thematizations and especially those related

¹² Kurtović, “Historiografska literatura,” 51.

¹³ “It seems as though historiography in Bosnia and Herzegovina has for the most part escaped the waves of revisionist writing, even though some works have, indeed, gone in that direction. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the past of the pre-socialist Yugoslav period has been revised not so much within the sphere of historiography as in public discourse, because the socialist period was less affected by this syndrome.” For more on this subject, see Kamberović, “Između kritičke historiografije i ideološkog revizionizma,” 14.

to the theory of Bogomilism were a belated response to modern Serbian/Orthodox and Croatian/Catholic refusal to acknowledge the Bosnian Muslim presence in the earliest periods of Bosnian and Hum past, and above all a reaction to what the Bosniaks regard as untenable and unjustifiable Catholicization of the Bosnian Church.¹⁴ In doing so, the present Bosniak medievalist positions, as well as their counterpositions, have neglected the fact that, methodologically, the entire phenomenon of medieval Christian heterodoxy should be considered separately from the context of national historiography and its retrospectively set tasks and objectives. Just as they have disregarded the fact that, by its nature, the heterodoxy phenomenon provided enough ground for any given simplistic interpretation—Catholic/Croatian, Orthodox/Serbian, and Bogomilist/Bosniak.

After the post-socialist societies in the territory of former Yugoslavia underwent the process of formal democratization, the historical science was largely converted into an instrument of national politics, and Bosnia and Herzegovina was no exception. The war of 1992–95 had tremendous implications for the state of its historiography. The growing interest in the past became motivated by political rather than scholarly consideration, and the goal of such scholarship was now to provide answers to current political issues. During this period, “historical science” in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as its neighborhood, “was reduced to an instrument of current politics, leaving absolutely no room for critical analysis, objective evaluation and interpretation of historical sources.”¹⁵

Once a nation establishes a clear, dominant historical narrative, and once a consensus is reached on the importance of the past, the consequences of interpreting the past on the present behavior of the nation depend on the nationalism that accompanies such a narrative. The

¹⁴ Such ambitions of Bosniak national planners were also spurred by some contemporary Croatian researchers. Josip Vrandečić, one of them, states: “Today, the prevailing and most reasoned historiographical thought is that represented by the pioneer in research on the Bosnian Church, Franjo Rački. He argued that the Bosnian Church belongs to neo-Manichean dualism, and is dogmatically and organisationally similar to the northern Italian Cathars and southern French Albigenses. The Bosnian Church is originally a heretical rather than devotional form of Catholicism” (Vrandečić, “Crkva bosanska i Crkva dalmatinska,” 6).

¹⁵ Šchić, “Historiografska literatura,” 135.

traumatic experience of the genocide and the struggle to defend the integrity, independence, and existence of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina are becoming the main categories of Bosniak national self-consciousness and key determinants of Bosniak identity. However, if historical narratives in multi-national states, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, are to ensure long-term stability, they should not strive toward being forcibly identical. Rather, historical narratives of the constituent nations should be “free of mutual intolerance, mutual criminalisation and mutual guilt, so that the constituent nations do not write histories in which they describe each other as enemies.”¹⁶

The popular Bosniak narrative on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s millennial statehood, which the Serbian and Croatian historical science ignored rather than denied, has overlooked that the present state can also exist without any reference to history, in other words, that referring to history has absolutely no bearing on the situation in the current state. The Bosniaks already had historical self-consciousness, even without their own state—let us recall the splendid cultural-historical opus of Safvet-beg Bašagić¹⁷—therefore, they could not and have not derived anything new or positive from the renewed attempts to justify the modern state on some ancient past, except for romantic nationalism. This narrative was based on establishing a spiritual, cultural, customary, and territorial-political continuity between Islam and the teachings of the Bosnian Church, medieval and Ottoman Bosnia, and the independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The thesis of the millennial continuity of Bosnian and Herzegovinian statehood has most to do with Bosniak-centric self-perceptions. This is where some essential categories of the new Bosniak identity-building strategy may be found: “millennial Bosnia,” “the most autochthonous,” “the most populous nation,” *šehidi*, as well as the qualification of the war as “defense-liberation.” Intellectuals have pointed to

16 Ramet, “Competing Narratives of Resentment & Blame,” 26–69.

17 With his life and work, Safvet-beg Bašagić (1870–1934) stood as a double bridge between Bosnian tradition and modernity. He came from a noble family of a long scholarly and intellectual tradition, mastered a number of Oriental languages and possessed a vast knowledge of traditional Bosnia; Bašagić obtained his doctoral degree at the University in Vienna, after which he became actively involved in modern political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

the cause-and-effect relationship between the Bosniak people and the Bosnian state. With the national revival, although one hundred years late, the Bosniaks have merely “asserted their millennial historical right to Bosnian land,” to Bosnian statehood, and thus definitively confirmed their national political subjectivity in the world community of nations, because “by reincarnating the Bosniak people, the state will be granted a standing it will continue to hold in the future.”¹⁸ The ongoing war is a struggle for the Bosniak national identity, in which the Greater Serbian and Greater Croatian ideologies in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina will definitely be defeated. Islam and the state are two fundamental values and conditions for the survival of the Bosniaks. “All modern states are states with one dominant nation in their state territories, whether they are unitary or federal; whether their citizens are members of different nationalities, language groups or religions; or whether they associate their external national identification with the name of the state whose citizens they are (Swiss, Albanians, Belgians, Americans, Spanish, and so on).”¹⁹ Such positions imply that the Bosniaks should be granted a privileged, dominant status in the state.

Insisting on endowing the present state sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina with historical legitimacy is a part of the ideological belief that the past is of utmost importance for the political present. But it may be argued that just the opposite is true, that is, that the ancient past can in no way be of any consequence for the present, nor can the present be in any way regulated by some historical arguments. By bringing the present Bosnian and Herzegovinian internal issues into a cause-and-effect relationship with the events that took place seven or eight centuries ago, we are dealing with the politicization of the past, we are leaving the scholarly field and entering the world of historiographical imagination. We may generally agree with Husnija Kamberović, director of the Historical Institute in Sarajevo, who states that “the thesis of an absolute and uninterrupted millennial state tradition and the thesis of a clear and absolute discontinuity of said state-

¹⁸ Ibrahimagić, “Neki aspekti organiziranja Bošnjaka,” 232.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 233.

hood are merely two extremes of the same spectrum,”²⁰ even though their respective proponents are all too eager to characterize any opinion that might differ from theirs as revisionist and mythmaking. In either case, there has been much talk about scholarship, but it is in fact about politics, where daily political interests lead to the situation in which one part of Croatian and Bosniak historians have begun copying one another. Namely, the aforementioned Bosniak and Croatian streams of interpretation, each declaring itself as the most accurate and absolute, are basically two ideologemes, two models of ideological instrumentalization of the past. Croatian historians will not improve the present constitutional-law position of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina by denying its continuity, and they will certainly not contribute to the establishment of a third, Croatian entity by such interpretation of history, which is being implicitly claimed by the Bosniak side. Nor will Bosniak historians and intellectuals be able to strengthen the present statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina by fostering the idea of continuous statehood.

Like in all similar cases, the cult of continuity has invoked among the Bosniak intellectual public the notion of “origin” as a profane form of mythological narrative, which nevertheless gave meaning to society during the process of laicization and fulfilled the need for the sacred. Said narrative puts the present generation of Bosnians in a contingent chain of events, collating random historical events and excurses into

20 See Kamberović, “Između kritičke historiografije i ideološkog revizionizma,” 18. “While one of the sides speaks of Bosnia’s millennial continuity, on which it builds a myth of the fundamental people, the other side in the public discourse draws on politico-religious manifestations, such as, for example, manifestations at Bobovac, which are dedicated to the medieval Bosnian Queen Catherine and which, too, seek to find their roots and then claim these roots as exclusively their own. In doing so, both sides call each other ‘revisionists’” (ibid.). The manifestation at Bobovac, devoted to the aforementioned Catherine of Bosnia, is of a relatively recent date. It dates back to 2002, when it started in collaboration with church, party, and state officials of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A letter written by the Archbishop of Vrhbosna, Cardinal Vinko Puljić, the author of said manifestation, to parish offices and church institutions, states the following: “In the recent years, I have regularly commemorated the anniversary of Catherine of Bosnia by celebrating Holy Masses at her grave in Rome. Upon consultation with my colleagues, I decided that future anniversaries of Queen Catherine be commemorated by praying for the entire country, our homeland, in all churches, but first and foremost at Bobovac. In this spirit, I decree that on October 25 all parish communities celebrate Mass for the Homeland.” Quoted from “Obrazac Mise za domovinu – 25. oktobra,” *Dnevni avaz*, Sarajevo, October 18, 2002, 19.

a chronologically and historically ordered sequence. In other words, this was not so much about a profane demand of certain Bosniak political circles for the present state to vindicate its ancient historical existence as it was about justifying the political existence of a few individuals in the past, and this is how the narrative of millennial Bosnia has become commonly held belief among the ordinary people. At the same time, however, it has been, both deliberately and for purely national ideological reasons, ignored that in Bosnia and Herzegovina it is impossible to objectively talk about the millennial state continuity, but it is possible and reasonable to believe that there was, and still is, a certain continuity of culture and society. This assertion does not relate so much to the continuity of institutions—except, perhaps, in the case of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena—as it does to the continuity of people and their relations marked by fear, suspicion, distrust, differentiation, repression of minorities, but also by coexistence, tolerance, peace, and love. Such social psychological relationships of Bosnian people have had a millennial continuity within the institutional social frame that has changed throughout history, as have the form and name of the state, while the Bosnian people's ties to the Bosnian land have remained as strong as ever.

A part of Bosniak public perceives the scholarly denial of the historical continuity of Bosnian statehood as the denial of present-day Bosnia and Bosniaks. The Bosniak academic community tackled the question whether the discontinuity thesis also implicitly “entails a corresponding political notion on whether Bosnia and Herzegovina can or should also exist as a state in modern times.”²¹ However, rather

21 See Zgodić, “Ustavno-pravni diskurs,” 221. On the question of continuity and discontinuity in interpreting Bosnian and Herzegovinian past, Zgodić stated the following on page 222: “In its most radical form, the thesis of discontinuity also occurs, for example, with Srećko M. Džaja: in fact, it is not even possible to discuss continuity, since according to his interpretation, the medieval Bosnia was but a *historical landscape* and that its history as a whole cannot be characterized by notions such as *the state and the Bosnian nation* (Džaja, *Konfesionalnost i nacionalnost Bosne i Hercegovine*). He incorporates the thesis of the millennial statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina into *Bosnian mythology*, but refuses to assign any ethnic substance to the term Good Bosnians, understanding this syntagm in medieval terms as referring to free men. (From his presentation at the symposium titled *Balkanska društva u promjenama: Upotreba historijskih mitova*, which took place in mid-November 2002 in Sarajevo, here quoted from: Amer Obradović, “Nebeski narod u zemaljskim problemima,” *Dani*, November 15, 2002,

than confined to the attention of narrow professional circles, the debate on this highly specialized scholarly issue was covered by political weeklies that galvanized the broad public with overgeneralized questions, such as: If medieval Bosniaks were Catholics, does this—by analogy with modern Catholicism and Croaticism—mean that Bosnia has always been and should be a Catholic or, rather, Croatian state? Such is the current political perspective of the entire issue as one part of the Bosniak scholarly community and general public see it. The general perception is nicely captured by the daily *Bošnjački avaz* in the title of one article: “Bosnia continues to be a Catholic society in which Bosniaks are a foreign element.”²² The same public also believes that the debate on the nature of the past is directed at future, which is why everyone who disagrees with its national self-perception reacts highly emotionally to all indications regarding medieval Bosnia. As for Bosniaks, in line with the currently prevailing nationalist spirit, they think highly uncritically that in this part of the Bosnian past, too, they were to find their place, and thus improve their situation here and now.²³

36.) On the other hand, for instance, the historian Dubravko Lovrenović will, by critically referring to the thesis of Nerzuk Ćurak from his book *Geopolitika kao sudbina* on ‘centuries-long mainstream of the Bosnian state,’ maintain that, according to Džaja, ‘there was, in fact, no such stream.’ There is no point in invoking some imaginary historical state today; this ‘catchword’ has not had any impact on the Bosnian reality ever since 1463. The Bosnian past demonstrates quite the opposite: that it is precisely the idea of the state that does not constitute its ‘mainstream’ (Lovrenović, “Priča o perifernoj zemlji”).

- 22 Faruk Vele, an interview with Ibrahim Pašić, PhD, professor of history, “Bosna se nastoji prikazati kao katolička zemlja u kojoj su Bošnjaci strani element,” *Dnevni avaz*, September 4, 2010, Supplement “Sedmica,” 2–3. With respect to the views of the historian Dubravko Lovrenović, which are largely perceived among the Bosniaks as the Croatian stance on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s past and to which the interview relates, Pašić states the following: “In this pseudo-scientific pamphlet (referring to Lovrenović’s book “Povijest est magistra vitae” —author’s addition), Dubravko Lovrenović dismisses a dozen Bosniak historians, cultural and public officials, and above all the academician Muhamed Filipović, as ‘charlatans,’ ‘mythomaniacs,’ ‘colporteurs,’ and their historiography as ‘mumbo-jumbo’ historiography. He accuses them of ‘craving for a reconquest,’ of fostering ‘linguistic nationalism,’ of ‘glorifying the Ottoman past,’ of conceiving ‘the cult of martyrdom as the meaning of the past,’ of ‘victimisation,’ of ‘bosnisation of tombstones and the Bosnian Church,’ of ‘indigenous demands.’”
- 23 The Department for the Cultivation of the Medieval Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded in 1997 for the purposes of furthering and popularizing such an interpretation current within the VKBI (Council of the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals). Its fundamental goal was to strengthen the awareness among the Bosniaks of the medieval Bosnian kingdom as an important epoch in the continuous development of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian statehood. See Ademović, *Almanah: 1992–2002*, 91.

Guided by these and similar initiatives, the Bosniaks have undertaken a series of research projects that could not have been carried out in the past and that now also aim toward establishing a unity and continuity in national memory. However, they have not been concerned with reinterpretation, for example, anti-communist or nationalist, like Croats and Serbs after the fall of communism, but rather with new research and filling the gaps in the memory of their own. Scientific projects such as *Orthography of the Bosnian Language*, *Grammar of the Bosnian Language*, *Bosnian Literature in 100 Books*, and *The History of the Bosniaks* were produced in the first post-socialist decade, with the aim to establish a scientific-cultural legitimacy of the nation. Incorporated into the education system, they were envisaged to contribute to the national-cultural codification. Given the above, these intellectual efforts were clearly made during Phase B in the development of national movements of small nations under Miroslav Hroch's typology.²⁴ Phase A of national movements was the period of scholarly agitation for the awakening of national consciousness, which had a limited impact, whereas Phase C saw the rise of mass national movements. In the case of the Bosniaks, the aforementioned phases relate to the cultural-national revival at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Phase A), the second period of revival took place in the 1970s and remained within the sphere of national culture (Phase B), whereas the third revival, a mass national movement, centered on post-communist political pluralism (Phase C).²⁵ It has often remained overlooked that any (overwhelming) presence of tradition is met with conflicting reac-

24 Miroslav Hroch's notion of a "small nation" relates to nations which at the time when they were formed into modern nations (a) "did not possess 'their own' ruling class, that is, a ruling class belonging to them ethnically, but were dominated by a ruling class of more or less alien nationality," (b) "formed an ethnic (and sometimes even a historical) unit, but never an independent political unit," and (c) "lacked a continuous tradition of cultural production in a literary language of their own, or had once possessed one, which was subsequently obliterated or underwent serious degeneration" (Hroch, *Društveni preduvjeti nacionalnih preporoda u Europi*, 37). For the model of this type of national development, Hroch uses the term "revival" of oppressed or small nations. The aforementioned term was used in the agitation of the nineteenth century. The adjective "small" bears a qualitative rather than a quantitative connotation and relates to the studies and comparisons of national movements of non-dominant ethnic groups. Hroch, *Društveni preduvjeti nacionalnih preporoda u Europi*, 56–62.

25 For more on the three Bosniak revivals, see Filandra, *Bošnjačka politika u XX stoljeću*.

tions. Over the years, the tradition in Bosnia and Herzegovina has generally become over-emphasised, adopted, and dictated rather unselectively, "all this in the hope to push through and complete the national emancipation and awareness."²⁶

USE OF SYMBOLS

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in most other European countries, establishing the link between the modern state, earlier state and proto-state forms is much more a matter of political necessity than of manifesting the formation of national spirit through history or the so-called strong state continuity, as demonstrated by nationalists. Here, again, the inevitable role was played by the diffused memory of landowners' elites from pre-modern world history, as centennial administrators of a certain territory, but due to modern political necessities, the state political continuity was to a major extent constructed and invented, also with the use of symbols. During the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina saw a surge of new/old flags fluttering in the spirit of restoration, which was very common among post-socialist societies both in the region and beyond. What made Bosnia and Herzegovina so specific was that different ethnic symbols prevailed over common national ones. Or, to put it more accurately, different ethnic symbols did not facilitate the establishment of a single national one, so that the state/national level of representation remains incomplete and artificial even today. Bosnian Croats and Serbs were symbolically integrated into the national milieus of their parent nations, while the Bosniaks, whose use of symbols will be outlined later in this paper, demonstrated much changeability, inconsistency, and an almost floundering approach to constructing and using their own symbols.

In the period of socialism, the coat of arms, the national anthem, and the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina were in no relation whatsoever to the Bosnian traditional identity. All heraldic emblems symbolized the ideological values of communism. The selection of fleur-de-lis, the royal insignia of medieval Bosnia, to be incorporated into the coat

26 Kurspahić, "Oprezno s tradicijom."

of arms of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–98) was an attempt to overcome the modern national tensions. Considering the complicated situation in the state, the coat of arms and the flag featuring fleur-de-lis as national symbols “certainly fulfilled all ‘nationally sensitive’ criteria and seemed like a deft and lasting solution.”²⁷ In postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina, this common state symbol was most fiercely rejected by Bosnian Serbs.

The part of Bosnian political and war reality that may, from a very liberal and overgeneralized perspective, be identified with the Bosniaks, that is, the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Army of RBiH) and legal government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has in all aspects of emblematic representations respected the principle of tolerance, official multi-cultural composition of both the government and army, personal ideologies, collective identities, as well as traditional and cultural rights of its members. Forming a vast majority in the composition of government and military institutions of the independent and internationally recognized state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosniaks did not present themselves as an ethnically distinct group, independent of the state at the very onset of the war in 1992, but exhibited their national affiliation symbolically, through the state, that is, through the collective multi-national prism. In doing so, they did not identify the state with themselves, but rather identified themselves with the state. Therefore, their symbolic representations included at least three dimensions: state, national, and religious. The national or religious dimension of symbolic representation started to prevail during different phases of the war and in various milieus, as well as with due regard for different local political conditions and traditions, while the state constantly retained its symbolic presence. And, apart from a conceptual and organized approach to the question of symbolization, spontaneity was the underlying characteristic of the entire Bosniak symbolical expression during the last war. Keep in mind that all processes related to the selection of signs and investing them with symbolic power were completely spontaneous and took place on the level of

27 Filipović, “Grb i zastava Bosne i Hercegovine u 20. stoljeću,” 126. The author then concludes that the subsequent period witnessed their “excess politicization” and that the flag with fleur-de-lis came to be seen as an exclusive symbol of only one ethnic group in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

local groups and individuals that participated on a completely voluntary basis. Some signs may convey different meanings in different situations and to different groups of people; thus, green color stands for religious affiliation at one time or place and for national affiliation at another, and so on.

At the top political and military state level—which was predominantly Bosniak during the war—there was an established policy of signs and symbols. Nevertheless, the extremely complicated time and place, as well as war-ravaged communication lines rendered the codification and implementation of this policy uneven. At the very onset of the war, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian political leadership “made it very clear who, where and when was allowed to wave which flag in the territory governed by the law of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”²⁸ There was always room for distinct ethnic and regional insignias of military units, with official military insignias worn on one arm and distinct insignias identifying individual units on the other. Our interest here will be in the distinct insignias of individual units. Freely selected to reveal their respective local traditions, the insignias embodied the symbolic expression of ordinary people. On the outbreak of the war, people self-organized to defend lives, homes, and homeland. At that time, the formation of names and insignias of small units was outside the influence of national politics. However, that changed in the ensuing period of institutionalizing and organizing military defense. To put it more accurately, what emblem a certain military brigade would use became a political matter decided from the municipal level upward.

Military units’ emblems incorporate state, national, and religious symbols. This kind of integration of symbolical levels may be observed in the usage of swords or sabers as eminently universal military symbols. The crossed swords behind the coat of arms representing the Army of RBiH are a distinctly European military symbol, a token of belonging to the same civilizational tradition, whereas the saber is—very much present on the flags of small units at the beginning of the

28 For more on the emergence, nature, and function of the state symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war, see Šadinlija, “Jedno vještačko poglavlje o zastavi,” 280. See also Šadinlija, “Nepopravljivo poglavlje o zastavi.”

war—a reflection of family tradition, something that is passed down from one generation to another, something that we see on gravestones every day throughout Bosnia. The third aspect of this specific military symbol is the double-bladed saber, a stylization of the *zulfiqar*, a weapon of the famous Islamic warriors, Hazreti Hamza and Hazreti Ali, which is part of the universal Islamic military symbolism.

The whole selection of symbols was an autonomous and spontaneous process that drew on various sources and resulted in extremely eclectic forms, both in character and composition. The Bosniak military tradition, which matured over one hundred years of warfare to protect the Ottoman interests and objectives, was no longer alive, and the question remained just how autonomous and distinct it truly could be in that period. The Bosniaks first began to display their own military symbols during the war for independence and statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992–95, and even these were, again, primarily subjected to the interests of the common state. The selection of symbols was the result of interplay of many factors, from national political tradition and epics, to religious affiliation, Western movie heroes, symbols of the former Yugoslav Army, and so forth. The symbols were chosen freely and combined even more so. Since the entire process took place within the framework of historical contextuality, it is impossible to confirm the existence of any recognizable and well-established system of national symbols. During the war, fleur-de-lis was the only fixed symbol of the state. Thus, after the end of the conflict, its unsolved aftermath and the inevitable prolonged impasse, fleur-de-lis came to be used as the Bosniak national symbol.

During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosniaks intensified their use of religious symbols as a means, not of Islamization of society as it might seem at first glance, but of strengthening collective consciousness and ideological motivation to defend their country. Thus, the religious term *šehidi* (“a soldier who lost his life following God’s path”) was used to describe those who died defending their country. The notion of *šehid* in the Bosniak/Bosnian liberation struggle was formalized during the burial of eight fallen defenders of Sarajevo in the Kovači Park, present-day *šehid* graveyard. The burial took place at the very beginning of the war (April 10, 1992), and the first to

make formal use of the term was then religious leader reis-ul-ulema Selimoski.

The term *šehid* was also formalized by military structures.²⁹ However, in the first year of the war, the military leadership stressed with pride that the Bosnian Army was made up of Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks who, in accordance with the multi-national and multi-religious composition, were living proof that religious life in the army should be based on three principles: voluntariness, equality of all religions, and mutual tolerance. They had never showed any signs of possible collision between distinct designations of the dead, separate religious practices, and the common patriotic feeling, to which we will return later in this paper. At the beginning of the war, everything was charmingly simple and in harmony with the best of Bosnian traditions on mutual respect for the differences. For this reason, the Army of RBiH used the dual expression “*šehidi* and fallen soldiers” throughout the duration of the war, whereby the latter component (“fallen soldiers”) solved the issue of nomenclature for non-Muslim and atheist casualties in the army.

The reasons why the term *šehid* came to denote the defenders of Bosnia and Herzegovina remain unclear. It is doubtful that it was some deliberate Bosniak policy devised at the very onset of the war to promote the Islamization of society, and there are no reliable sources that would corroborate such a claim. It is more likely that the fallen Muslim defenders of the homeland were considered *šehidi* and buried in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as was the national tradition and at the same time the religious rule to which the Bosniaks adhered; the orders from the military authorities only followed afterwards. Spontaneity was at the heart of everything; no one was concerned with the character of the state then, but mere biological survival of the nation. In any event, this term marks the specific Bosniak national tradition and sets it apart from other national traditions—that is, Serbian and Croatian—as well as the state as such, so that this medium of so-

29 At the consultation on morale, information and religion in the Army of RBiH, on October 8, 1992. In the introductory presentation, Sefer Halilović stated: “We must maintain the highest level of memory and respect for our martyrs, our *šehidi*. Because in literal translation, *šehid* means a ‘witness.’ Our fallen soldiers bear witness with their lives to the truth of our struggle.” Šefko Hodžić and Hamed Ibišević, “Zlatni ljiljani svijetle duše,” *Oslobođenje*, October 9, 1992, 3.

cial life, too, established a parallelism between the national (Bosniak) and state (Bosnian).

In his research on death and nationalism among the Bosnian Muslims, Xavier Bougarel claims that the use of the term *šehid* was not part of the process of reviving the tradition, but rather an aspect of the nation-building and Islamisation processes.³⁰ Without denying the tendencies of some individuals in the Bosniak leadership structures toward Islamisation of the population, it is our opinion that in this case the use of the term *šehid* was nevertheless based on the national tradition and not on what was supposed to be instrumental Islamization of society.³¹ Namely, Bosniak history and culture are simply replete with *šehid* symbolism, with by far the most prevalent *šehid* toponyms, so-called Šehitluci, *šehid* burial grounds, found on the outskirts of nearly every Bosnian city. It is for this reason that when analyzing the ambiguity or polysemy of this term, Bougarel also points to its seculariza-

30 Bougarel, "Death and the Nationalist," 167–91.

31 Izetbegović's policy of principled protection of individual and national rights of all inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina was constantly put to the test during the war. One example of such policy can be found in a letter that he sent in the summer of 1995, in the capacity of the president of SDA, to all committees of his party in the free territory, in response to the indications and complaints from the leadership of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the devastation of its buildings in central Bosnia. In his response to the allegations, Izetbegović stated the following: "If you find them to be true, then to the extent that they are true, you must take steps to prevent such incidents from happening again, both for reasons of principle and for practical reasons. For reasons of principle, because such procedures are against our tradition and because we do not hold the right to prosecute people who are not of the same religion as we are ("There shall be no compulsion in religion," "To you be your religion, to me be mine." – Qur'an). And for practical reasons, because rather than solving anything, this only compounds the already complicated situation. When it comes to the integrity of Bosnia, we have always had a strong ally in the Catholic Church. But this is how we lose them. In whose interest is it to drive Catholics into Boban's arms? Such politics objectively contributes to Bosnia's dismemberment. One thing is clear perhaps: This is not a monoreligious and mononational Slovenia; Bosnia is a nationally mixed state that cannot be complete without the Croats and the Serbs. Whoever fails to see this is politically blind. And since we are destined to live together with the Croats and the Serbs, we will support those who advocate peace and normalcy. By aforementioned actions—insofar as they are true—we are creating more terrorists every passing day, and they are by definition against Bosnia. And so it goes, while our soldiers are fighting for Bosnia's integrity, some of our would-be politicians are relieving their anxieties by destroying what our soldiers are dying for." Sarajevo, April 11, 1995, no. 03-021-715/95. Signed by Alija Izetbegović. The letter was sent to the Supreme Command of the ARBiH and then distributed to all military units, with the instruction to read its contents and check whether any such problems had occurred in their areas of operations. See RBiH, Generalštab ARBiH, Uprava za moral, Br. 6/539, Sarajevo, April 13, 1995.

tion. We, however, do not only point to it, but underscore it. Initially used to refer to all Bosniak soldiers, the term gradually lost its religious meaning and gained an increasingly national dimension. At one point, the notion of *šehid* was added the definition Bosnian *šehid*, as inscribed in one of typical *šehid* gravestones (*nišani*) at Veliki Park in Sarajevo. And finally, the religious practice of burying *šehidi* has from the start responded to the wishes, understanding and needs of modern people. Thus, for instance, burials in common graves (*mezari*), albeit a doctrinal Islamic duty for *šehidi*, were instantly abolished.

INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF SIGNS IN PUBLIC SPACE

Both street and city toponyms were subject to instrumentalization. It was the continuation of the previous socio-political practice in which every newly-established regime demonstrated its authority and ideology through the names of streets and squares. The prominent regional authority on this phenomenon, Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, is right when she states that the names of streets, squares, and memorial plaques contribute to the semiotic presence of the ruling ideology by giving the city architecture a special symbolic value. "Naming and re-naming streets is an example of how political processes influence semiotic procedures."³² Within the framework of all national cultures of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their respective ideologies, the changes were much more radical this time. The renaming procedures were part of joint efforts toward nation rebuilding. They were part of procedures aimed at transforming worldviews. They are used to "erase one kind of memories and create new ones, while history restarts from scratch with every new regime."³³ Renaming the past had to be in the function of the new, national society, it had to discover its authentic memory, and reflect the ideological and political positions of the new local administrative elite. The changes in pre-existing conditions, inherited from the socialist regime, were necessary and legitimate, which should be emphasized as an undisputed fact for all the

³² Rihtman-Auguštin, *Ulice moga grada*, 51.

³³ See Rihtman-Auguštin, *Ulice moga grada*, 60.

parties involved in the renaming procedures; the issue at hand is the method of their implementation and the nature of new signs. In the most recent process of renaming city streets and squares in post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least three models have been clearly identified. The model of absolute national domination (Banja Luka), the model of national segregation (Mostar), and the reconciliation model aiming at ideological domination (Sarajevo).

The case of the Sarajevo municipality of Stari Grad, which makes up the historical center of the city, reveals the immense emotional charge that the aforementioned act entailed. The editorial comment on a text from the then national weekly *Ljiljan* regarding the process of renaming stated that the existing names were not only “the laughing-stock of the city, but a disgrace to every Bosniak.”³⁴ All Serbian conquerors, hajduks, generals, national workers, and exterminators of Muslims had central streets in Sarajevo named after them, the commentary went. In justifying name changes, reference was most often made to the fact that the city of Sarajevo had “already lived under unique topographical occupation for seventy years: a large number of its streets and important roads, especially the main arteries, carried the names of historical figures symbolising the decades- or centuries-long Serbian aspirations to conquer the city and Bosnia as a whole.”³⁵ During what may safely be considered a politically correct process of renaming, the names of streets were changed back to their original, historical names.

In Mostar, a town split by the war between two ethnic groups, the Bosniaks and the Croats, one may witness a model of radical and one-sided name changes, as well as a collision of two opposing ideological principles: the principle of partisan, communist infallibility from World War II, embraced by the Bosniaks on their side of the town, and the principle of repression on the model of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), advocated by the Croats.³⁶ Streets in the Bosniak part of the town have so far retained the names of partisans/anti-fascists.

34 “Novi nazivi sarajevskih ulica,” *Ljiljan*, March 23, 1994, 25.

35 See Zlatar et al., *Općina Stari grad*, 8.

36 For more on this subject, see Ratkušić, “Između NDH-ovske zaludenosti i partizanske nepogrješivosti,” 18.

Thus, for instance, there is no street named after Husaga Čišić, an eminent citizen and former mayor of Mostar, but there is one named after his son Husref, who died at a very young age, but was a communist. In contrast to what happened in Croatia and is revealed in Ljiljana Radonić's chapter, the Croatian streets kept the names of fascist political and military officials of the NDH fascist state long after the war, still clearly testifying to the fact that the Croatian part of the divided Mostar's administration at one point supported neo-fascism.

The Croatian and Bosniak sides in Mostar find it hard to reach a consensus on the names of streets, squares, and public buildings, even though it is required by the criteria of the city council commission for the revision of names.³⁷ Therefore, the reasons that led to the present state of affairs, mainly characterized by the deliberate lack of political will to reach an agreement and to present the notions of peaceful co-existence and shared city as untenable, should not be sought in the past. But these practices tenaciously—and wrongly—persist, perpetuating the problem. Recently, such behavior was most eloquently described by a Croatian cultural worker and former participant in the renaming process, who states: "The names of streets in Mostar suggest that the WWII is still not over in this town. The names on the so-called left side of Mostar are of partisans, and here [on the right side] they are a mix, a bit of democracy and a bit of Ustasha. Until the WWII is over, not even street names will be normal."³⁸ The statement

37 At the second meeting of the Commission of the Mostar City Council for Revising the Names of Streets, Squares, and Public Buildings held on March 30, 2005, the following criteria were passed: "All names that are associated with fascism, chauvinism or any other form of hatred and intolerance, or are based on national or religious exclusivism will be replaced with appropriate alternatives. 1. Streets, institutions, and squares in the City of Mostar may carry the names of famous economists, cultural-educational figures, sportsmen and public officials who contributed to the lasting affirmation of the City of Mostar, and who were born or worked for at least a period of their lives in Mostar; 2. Names that are derived from traditional names and toponyms specific to Mostar and have withstood a decades-long test; 3. Names that symbolize any affirmative form of assistance for the well-being of all citizens of Mostar, extended by any state, government, city, or individual as an embodiment of these deeds; 4. Names must be based on information obtained from assuredly relevant sources; 5. Names based on the cultural-historical heritage of Mostar as homage to our past; 6. All names must be adopted by consensus." The document is kept in the author's archive.

38 A statement by the painter Marin Topić. See Smajkić, "U Mostaru još traje Drugi svjetski rat," *Dnevni avaz*, July 4, 2009. Supplement "Sedmica," 9.

does not call for a new-old war, for putting on partisan and Ustasha uniforms again, and bringing the war to an end. But it does imply political domination of winning mentalities in Mostar, in a way in which one side still perceives itself as the winner and the other as the defeated, and vice versa.

Banja Luka illustrates a negative example of one nation's—in this case Serbian—dominance over the life in the city. The exclusive Serbian administration has since 1991 renamed streets, squares, and parts of the city with names that are in no relation to the city and its tradition. The first to be removed were anti-fascist, Bosniak or Croatian signs. The renaming process aimed to nationalize the city's public space through ethnically institutionalized discrimination. Most new names served the function of ethnically cleansing the city of non-Serbian population and, even today, represent a psychological and social obstacle, preventing refugees or displaced persons from returning to their homes. According to the 2007 report, 338 out of 461 street names were related to Serbian cultural heritage and Serbian culture in general, 3 to Bosniak history and heritage, 20 to Croatian culture and history, and 100 to general toponyms, world, and former Yugoslavia.³⁹ For the sake of comparison: in 1979, 81 out of 403 street names were related to persons of Bosniak nationality, 55 to persons of Croatian nationality, 114 to persons of Serbian nationality, and 153 streets “carried the names of personalities from other republics or countries, and geographical concepts.”⁴⁰ Concerns voiced by city activists that the situation concerning the names of streets, neighborhoods, and squares in Banja Luka was “highly unsatisfactory and unworthy of Banja Luka's reputation as a democratic, anti-fascist, and multi-ethnic European city with

39 See “Rezime i zaključci rasprave sa Okruglog stola održanog u Banjaluci 29. juna 2007. godine na temu ‘Nazivi ulica, naselja i trgova u Banjaluci – sadašnje stanje i kako do evropskih kriterija i najbolje prakse’” (the document is kept in the author's archive). The round table was organized by the Union of Allied Citizens of Banja Luka and attracted a large attendance by citizens and city representatives, the Council of Peoples of Republika Srpska, members of some international organizations, representatives of Banja Luka's SUBNOR, and the society “Josip Broz Tito.” The introductory paper was presented by Professor Fuad Balić.

40 Armina Galijaš, “Sjećanje ili zaborav kroz preimenovane ulice,” a paper presented at the International Scientific Meeting “Kultura sjećanja – istorijski/povijesni lomovi i savladavanje prošlosti: 1992. godina u memoriji nacija,” Banja Luka, December 4–5, 2009, 2.

a 500-year tradition of peaceful coexistence among its inhabitants”⁴¹ went unnoticed, as the city administration of the time was neither multi-national nor anti-fascist or democratic.

⁴¹ See “Rezime i zaključci rasprave sa Okruglog stola održanog u Banjaluci 29. juna 2007 na temu: Nazivi ulica, naselja i trgova u Banjaluci – sadašnje stanje i kako do evropskih kriterija i najbolje prakse,” 2. The document is kept in the author’s archive.

CHAPTER

8

Post-Socialist Historiography Between Democratization and New Exclusivist Politics of History

O t o L u t h a r

INTRODUCTION

“**W**ith time, the manner and form of narration change, but the need for a story and storytelling remains,” said Ivo Andrić when being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961. However, as may be gathered from the speech that he prepared for Oslo, he was referring not so much to literature as to history, even though he considered the latter to be an integral part of the former. When talking about storytelling, Andrić was referring to the protective power of stories that we so often tell each other with the sole purpose of dispelling our fears. He believed that it is only through “the words of a good storyteller that we can become aware of what we have done and what we have missed,” but more than anything, he was convinced that “stories incorporate the true history of mankind.” What is more, he believed that they could “at least give us a premonition, if not a complete understanding of this history.”¹

In the following chapter, I want to show that the fear Andrić talked about can from time to time lull us into blindly believing those sto-

1 Andrić, *Misel, ujeta v divjini*.

ries that know nothing about “perhaps” or “anticipation.” Or to put it more precisely, in discussing the straightforwardness of post-socialist revisionist historiography, I show how hope in the uncensored interpretation of the past that accompanied the “end of communism” gave way to the fear of yet another strand of one-sided politics of history.

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Nevertheless, with respect to the debate on the post-socialist historiography of the last twenty-five years, I am particularly interested in the discussion about the complexity of democratization of historiographical interpretation after 1989. Concentrating on professional, political, and popular (mis)use of history in Slovenia during the period between the late 1980s and the early 2010s, I see historical revisionism as part of a very complex process. What is more, I firmly believe that more than two decades after the end of “communism” the very term should be seen as part of complex changes in the historiographical and political landscape of Southeastern Europe. At the same time I see this process as a result of “discontinuity of Memory.” Borrowing the term from Reinhart Koselleck, I not only want to point out the rupture in the historical interpretation after 1989, but stress the importance of his “histories in the plural” concept for preventing the personal memories from being transformed into a narrative form of writing history that includes one-sided generalizations. Like George Mosse in his *The Nationalization of the Masses*, Koselleck, too, believed that the new politics of memory “sought to express and mobilize national feeling.” He, too, would claim that this “new style” has “become [...] a secularised religion” based “upon a use of myths, symbols” and special type of “monuments.”² And finally, it was Koselleck who convincingly described the ways in which the wars of the twentieth century changed the memorial practices of commemorating violent death.

This is particularly visible in the countries of former Eastern Bloc with Slovenia representing a very special case. Nevertheless, the post-1991 situation in Slovenia clearly shows that all attempts to explain, le-

2 Olsen, *History in the Plural*, 276.

gitimize, or use modern violent death politically are doomed to fail or express pure ideology, “because the only meaning that can be recaptured from violent death are various forms of inexpressible existential suffering.”³

Beside this, the debate in Slovenia consists of different sub-processes, starting with the discussion on the nature of historical explanation being overshadowed by a political attempt to monopolize the revised historical interpretation. Once vivid interest in new forms of historical representation as well as the awaited democratization of historical interpretation was replaced by a strongly politicized reinterpretation clearly marked by two processes: nationalization of history and the efforts to achieve new political monopolization of a particular version of historical interpretation.

NATIONALIZATION OF THE PAST

By using the term nationalization of the past/history, I am not referring to the early stage of modernization in historiography, modernization enabled by people like Leopold von Ranke or Jules Michelet, although there are some similarities between the nineteenth-century rise of the concept of national history and revised post-socialist understanding of the past. Just like Michelet and Ranke, post-socialist revisionists, too, view the nation as the main actor of the past. In a similar vein as the authors of the *Histoire de la Revolution Francaise* and *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker*, they see the nation as a community with its own personality and not as a community of individuals. But this is where all similarities end. What we are witnessing at history departments, institutes, museums, and so on, and especially in the newly-established states of Southeastern Europe, should not, despite a profusion of works on national history, be understood only as an integral part of national emancipation, but also as a return to the linear descriptive history of nations past on which, not least, also builds the current politics of history. The most interesting actors of this process are the historians who have converted from the socialist period,

3 Ibid., 279.

abandoned the communist internationalism, and started to re-create national narrative templates in which present-day events are connected with ancient paradigms and “effectively preventing the past from ever receding from an emotional present tense.”⁴ In doing so, they contribute to an identity conflict or, as Yehudith Auerbach would put it, they help the political actors to “preserve both traumatic victimhood and claims for redress” of the existing interpretations.⁵ Being part of a national narrative seems to have become a special desire and an enduring force or, as Hayden White would put it, having the feeling of being inside *national* history, has again become a special value attached to a “certain quest for group identity.”⁶ The quickest to learn this were the new conservative political elites who discovered that the fastest way to win an electoral majority was to play to the dominant nationality’s latent resentment and fear of difference and otherness.

It is also for this reason that we can, just like the Czech historian Michal Kopeček, talk about the post-socialist “absolutist’ rule of the national history paradigm” or “the history of the nation as the norm.”⁷ I could not agree more with the editor of the book *The Past in the Making* when he writes that the “‘liberalization’ of historical studies after 1989 brought about the restoration of old conceptual modes.”⁸ By liberalization he means liberation from the Marxist–Leninist approach that “did not lead to a critical assessment of the persistent national historical narratives or recognition of an essential diversity of historical experiences under the surface of seemingly unified national histories.”⁹

Since this is not a debate about the “Marxist–Leninist” way of doing history, suffice it to say that the majority of historians in socialist countries had very little to do with Marxism and Leninism. The majority of them, hardly familiar with Marxist ideas of history, by adopting parts of Marxist terminology, simply paid tribute to what was generally considered as the Marxist way of writing history and then

4 Partner, “Our History/Your Myths: Narrative and National Identity,” 137.

5 Auerbach, “The Reconciliation Pyramid,” 297.

6 White, “The Historical Event,” 9.

7 Kopeček, *Past in the Making*, 80, 82.

8 Ibid., 82.

9 Ibid., 83.

continued with the usual positivist nation-centered narrative. In some cases, like in the mid-sixties Poland, the official Marxist-Leninist historiography even rejected the Marxist method of cognition.¹⁰ This is why I agree with the conclusions of the Hungarian historian Tamás Kende, who claims that “discipline called (communist) party history, in the form as it was intended to cultivate in our region, has deceased without ever reaching its ‘high peak.’” And it is also safe to say that its main intellectual achievement was its self-destruction, since neither its quasi Marxist-Leninist eschatology nor the reform Titoist or Kardelj economic politics were Marxist. Twenty years later, in the mid-1980s, almost everyone would refer to the distorted aspects of national history and disrespected traditions that were supposedly getting fixed. At the same time, almost everyone was focused on the redefinition of national identity.

Although no one—at least in the beginning of this process—would use the term politics of the past or politics of history, the majority of those interested in this debate argued that politics must make an effort to promote positive historical interpretation with a clear moral view of the recent past in society.

It is on this very premise that new history institutes, museums, or research centers were established all across Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Their task was either to redefine national identity or to achieve the so-called national reconciliation. At least this is clearly the task of the Slovenian Center for National Reconciliation established (2007) by the Ministry of the Interior.

A New Politics of the Past

The creation of an institution that openly serves the nationalistic political elites in radical reinterpretation of the second half of the last century was quite a surprise. Not only because of its militant anti-commu-

¹⁰ Here I am referring to the fate of Jacek Korun and Krol Modzelewski. The two young Polish social scientists have written a *manifest* Marxist analysis of Polish state socialism, questioning its socialist and Marxist character. For the very writing of the manuscript, which later became known as the *Open Letter to the Party Members*, the authors were persecuted and later imprisoned. See more in Kenda, “The (anti-) Marxist Geistesgeschichte.”

nism without communists but because of its disregard for the decades long discussion on new forms of writing history. Not least, the so-called Ljubljana school of historiography has had a significant tradition of studying the history of everyday life, history of ideas, mentalities, social and cultural history, tradition that rejects any attempt whatsoever at homogenizing the interpretation of the past. Even more so, a significant number of works of historians educated in the 1960s and 1970s shows that the narrowly political and descriptive history underwent an enormous transformation and in some cases even became what would later be described as historical anthropology. Besides, the 1980s traditional historiographical establishment had to face an articulated critique of the problematic relationship between history and ideology. Nevertheless, there were some who (even) argued that historiography must not only "raise the question of the contemporary role of historical awareness but must also provide an answer to this question."¹¹

However, the answer was not what they expected. On the contrary, the result was similar to what Aviezer Tucker describes as "value-driven revisionism," accompanied by a significant revision in the system of evaluating historical events, actions, and actors. Instead of revised history, we have a revisionist historiography that is immune to the effect of new evidence. What we are faced with is an attempt to confuse historical knowledge with political programming. And part of this is also that the nationalization of the past led to the formulation of a demand for a radical revision of the most traumatic episodes of the national past in the period of 1941–45 and the time immediately after the war.

In Slovenia the post-1989 revision is focused on the rehabilitation of active collaboration with the occupation forces during World War II. Starting with the reinterpretation of collaboration into functional collaboration and patriotic anti-communism, the reinterpretation was joined by new and even more radical assertions explaining socialism as the prolongation of the war. In the opinion of Slovenian revisionists, Yugoslavia was an "armed party-run state [that] attack[ed] its own people in most violent manners." Their interpretation reached its indisputable peak in the assertion that the resistance movement is a

11 Vodopivec, "Poskus opredelitve razvoja slovenskega zgodovinopisja," 11.

made-up story of the “former party mythomaniac delirium and illusionism” and that its atrocities “surpass those committed by fascism and Nazism.”

Because of these and similar statements it is safe to say that radical historical revisionism in Slovenia not only relies on “bad philosophy, invalid arguments and misunderstandings of contemporary epistemology and philosophy of science”¹² but prefers therapeutic values instead of the standard consensus-generating cognitive values that historians of diverse backgrounds agree on. As already stressed by Aviezer Tucker, “the most frequently-used therapeutic values in historiography include: the denial of historical guilt ... ; the promotion of self-respect, for instance via national myths; and the elimination of a sense of alienation and absurdity, for instance through conspiracy theories.”¹³

THE DEATH AND THE DEAD

The systematic denial of wartime collaboration is also one of the reasons why I have decided to compare memory protocols related to the re-emerging memory on violent death and violence in general. According to Dubravka Ugrešić: “The Easterners become most sensitive when it comes to two things: community and the past.”¹⁴ In her opinion, they burst into a fit of “necrophile passion”¹⁵ when discussing the past, especially when it all comes down to settling a score with the “phantom of communism.”¹⁶ She believes that the current representations of the killed stem from the very old tradition of perceiving the nation as the victim. Moreover, in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, said tradition has established itself to the extent that every com-

¹² Tucker, “Historiographic Revision and Revisionism,” 3.

¹³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴ Ugrešić, *Kultura laži*, 233.

¹⁵ A similar description can be found in Svetlana Alexijewitsch’s book *Secondhand-Zeit. Leben auf den Trümmern des Sozialismus*, where the Homo Sovieticus or Sowok in general is described as a person with “a peculiar attitude toward death.” The narratives of people whose memories she has been collecting for her book “are replete with the words ‘shoot,’ ‘gun down,’ ‘liquidate,’ ‘arrest,’ ‘do away with’ ...” (Alexijewitsch, *Secondhand-Zeit*, 9). In her opinion, Sowok (plural: Sowki) knows not only special terms for good and evil, for heroes and martyrs, but also for death.

¹⁶ Ugrešić, *Kultura laži*, 80.

ment made in reference to the flagrant and serious violations of human rights “is explained as an attack on the young Slovenian, Croatian, Macedonian and somewhat older Serbian state.” When dealing with the memory of World War II and postwar socialist Yugoslavia, Ugrešić speaks of “the terror of forgetting” that stems from the “culture of lying.” She describes how Yugoslavia has in a majority of newly-created states become “the forbidden word, and the terms Yugoslav, Yugonostalgic or Yugo-zombie are synonyms with national traitor.”¹⁷ Therefore, she, too, was not exactly surprised to see an overnight change in dealing with the traumatic past after 1991. Antifascists, partisans, communists, leftists, anti-nationalists (who were very positively evaluated before 1991) became the villains, whereas war collaborators as well as local fascists and Nazis “acquired a neutral or even positive connotation.” A similar *reevaluation* of values may be traced from Ljubljana to Skopje, on the level of everyday as well as cultural, political, and ideological life. Little wonder, then, that such “mental retouching” and “terror of remembering and forgetting”¹⁸ also entailed a radical change in the memorial landscape.

The last one is particularly significant for Slovenia, which is why I will focus on the very process/practice/moment in which, or through which, collaboration was redefined as patriotic opposition against communism. In doing so, I am particularly interested in the reevaluation of the resistance movement into communist revolution and the translation of local perpetrators into victims of communism.

THE MONUMENTS ON THE MOVE

Like some experts dealing with history and material culture, I believe that just as “a visit to a museum, a trip to a historical building,”¹⁹ a stroll through the cemetery “reveals a mass of data that would [...] be considered a gold mine of sources.” The only part that disagrees with the authors such as Karen Harvey is that these are primary sources or “raw materials of a historian.” Like any other text that serves as a ral-

¹⁷ Ugrešić, *Kultura laži*, 89.

¹⁸ Ibid., 90–91.

¹⁹ Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, 1.

lying point for a shared common memory and identity, monuments in particular are “the material signifiers of ideas.” Moreover, as they tend to be “the personification of the nation,”²⁰ they also are meaningful rather than merely communicate meaning.²¹ Despite the fact that they are a text with “its own grammar and vocabulary,”²² monuments, like material culture in general, encapsulate the myriad and shifting contexts through which they acquire meaning. Or as Harvey would put it: “Material culture is not simply objects that people make ... it is an integral part of ... human experience.”²³ Therefore, the objects are “active and autonomous, not simply reflective.”²⁴ Through their materiality—their shape, function, decoration, and so—monuments play a role in creating and shaping experiences, identities, and relationships. Or to paraphrase Cochran and Beaudry, monuments are a powerful and very “active agent in social life.”²⁵ Monuments that are part of World War II memorial sites, however, are generally also sites of trauma “and the extent to which it remains invested with trauma marks the extent to which memory has not been effective in coming to terms with it, notably through modes of mourning.”²⁶

But more importantly, like Aleida Assmann, I consider monuments as an excellent example for the understanding of the so-called semantic decoding of heroes and victims. It is also my conviction that in the 1980s and 1990s the entire Europe witnessed a change in the victim semantics (Opfersemantik), (Sabrow) that facilitated the conversion of the heroic memorial landscape into a memorial landscape of victims. The end of socialism only further accelerated the process, while simultaneously uncovering certain practices that began to emerge soon after World War II. In Austria, for instance, having presented itself as the first victim of Hitler (*erstes Opfer Hitlers*) soon after 1945, we may witness a process that the Austrian novelist Martin Pollack describes as prolongation.

20 Ibid., 15.

21 Miller and Tilley, “Editorial,” 8.

22 Martin, “Shaping the Field,” 4.

23 Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, 3.

24 Ibid.

25 Cochran and Beaudry, “Material Culture Studies and Historical Archaeology,” 195.

26 LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, 10.

When discussing World War II memorials in Austria, Pollack is intrigued by the way they were simply extended in a uniform victim narrative whose political nature is suggested as an accidental and totally unintended consequence. On the one hand, he has established that in the major part of Austria, more than half a century after World War II, Jewish, Roma, and other real victims of Nazism are still absent from World War II memorial landscape. On the other hand, he observes that this role has from the very beginning been attributed to the fallen Wehrmacht soldiers and members of the Waffen-SS. Memorials that had from the 1920s and 1930s onward commemorated the victims of World War I were soon after World War II systematically added memorials or memorial plaques dedicated to *Den Toten der Waffen-SS*. In this way, the perpetrators were systematically transformed into victims, whereas the real victims continued to remain invisible and hence marginalized. In Burgenland, the southeasternmost province of Austria, Pollack was only able to find one single monument that, in addition to military “victims,” also included a memorial dedicated to civilian victims. Judging from the account of Reinhold Gaertner, other Austrian provinces reveal a similar trend. He himself has investigated cases in Tyrol and Carinthia. And if in Tyrol, hero worship (Heldenverehrung) was already in the 1990s transformed into the memory of the dead (Totengedenken), the same transformation has taken place at a considerably slower pace in Carinthia. At the time when the province was ruled by Jörg Haider, the fallen soldiers of Wehrmacht and members of the Waffen-SS were described as representatives of the generation that gave its life for the “future of the Fatherland.”²⁷ Besides, Haider was one of the shrewdest manipulators who used the “generation of the fallen in World War I to cover up and conceal the crimes committed in World War II”²⁸ Gaertner, like Pollack, speaks of concealed homogenization and overgeneralization of the fact that the memorials also listed criminals. It is also for this reason that in Austria both world wars could until recently be “labelled as ‘ordinary’ and (therefore, author’s insertion) ‘the same.’”²⁹ In any

²⁷ Gaertner, “Opfer oder Helden,” 213.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 209.

event, a typical war monument in Austria continues to remain even today a two-part monument dedicated to the fallen soldiers among which they were most likely also the persecutors. In this way, the real victims were erased/obliterated twice over: by the hatred of their persecutors and by the ignorance of their descendants. Or as Philippe Grimbert would put it: the silence not only swallowed their lives but also covered all trace of their existence.³⁰

A similar practice can also be observed in Slovenia. Even though such prolonged memorials are still a minority, the purpose of their initiators is essentially the same. The only difference is in the technique. What Pollack calls *Erweiterung* and Gaertner *Homogenisierung*, I would translate into selective integration. In doing so, I draw on Alaida Assmann, who resorts to the same term in her last book *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur* (2013). But more importantly, just like Pollack, she sees this procedure not merely as unification but as equation. In short, in post-1945 Austria, as well as in post-1991 Slovenia, an important part of war memorials tends not toward formulating a common memorial landscape but toward unifying and/or equating different and in certain cases incompatible groups of the fallen. Or as Alaida Assmann would put it, in order to forget and forgive, this process leads to an integration of perpetrators and victims.

Moreover, in the process of nationalization of suffering, the whole new founding trauma was established. Following the radical revision of the interpretation of World War II, the activities of the Home Guards, local collaborators with the occupying Italians and Germans (called *Domobranci*) are seen as national-liberating and heroic. According to Slovenian revisionists, the source of collaboration (and hence the blame for it) is not the political, moral, or ideological project of collaborators but communism, revolution, and the resistance movement, which prompted the collaborators to raise a “counter” movement. Besides school textbooks, a whole range of other texts—spanning historical, political, and media discourses, as well as new monuments—are being mobilized with the aim to reclaim the “true” history. In the following section, I will focus on the change in the war

30 Grimbert, *Secret*, 65.

memorial landscape, with a particular interest in the narrative of monuments to collaborators.

The Politics and Textuality of the New Memorial Landscape

In doing so, I want to determine the kind of rhetoric, symbolism, and choreography it rests on—in what kind of symbolic guise it tries to impose and legitimize itself. Monuments to the Home Guards are a part of the politics of the past, which interprets loss, death, and events that caused them in a specific way, linking the past to the present. The key role of the Home Guards monuments is to construct the executions as a one-sided national trauma. By simply switching the roles of victim and perpetrator, their creators and initiators aim to reinterpret the meaning of the resistance movement, collaboration, and communism. In short, the new monuments fix the interpretation of the “civil war” and avoid discussion on the struggle between the resistance on the one hand and the occupying forces and their local collaborators on the other.

Let us look at some examples. As stated above, my focus here is on the cases that support the thesis on integration. Some instances even involve integration of memory of all “victims”: on soldiers who fell in World War I, members of the resistance and collaborators. Let us first take a look at the example of prolongation that is reminiscent of Austrian monuments. The difference between two-part monuments mentioned by Pollack and triptychs in Slovenia is in their placement in the existing memorial landscape. Instances where plaques are added to the existing monuments to the fallen in World War I in Slovenia are found exclusively in cemeteries, most often on the façades of parish chapels. Since monuments as a component part of this installation are also often dedicated to parish priests or other local dignitaries, it is safe to say that they form characteristic memorial triptychs.

On the other hand, the Slovenian case is not only about the process of changing the roles of perpetrators and victims. Or more accurately, this is only true of the first part of the transformation or of those few cases where local priests followed the orders of the church authorities, that is, Archdiocese in Ljubljana, and enabled the creation of a unified

memorial landscape.³¹ The triptych mentioned above is in its very essence meant as an integration of those who may now be recognized as victims at all. In other words, the so-called ethnicization of suffering (*Ethnisierung des Leidens*) in Slovenia does not take place through the integration of all victims but through the exclusion of one group of victims. In some cases, we are actually confronted with a two-step process. The first step is similar to the practice in Austria and involves perpetrators being turned into victims. In Slovenia, this step is followed by the second step where the real victims are excluded or even transformed into perpetrators.

Correspondingly, the rhetoric of local revisionists maintains that “the Slovenes still (live, author’s insertion) in a totalitarian system.”³² According to the authors of the leading revisionist journal *Zaveza*, the partisans were the “executioners,” who committed “genocide” and are now blocking the process of reconciliation. In their view, the last proposal to build a monument to the victims of all wars is “just another manipulation”³³ and true reconciliation may only be attained by erecting monuments dedicated to the Home Guards.³⁴ Anything else is “hoax,” a “lie,” and an obstacle “in the search for lost empathy.”³⁵

Given the above, it is also (and especially) in the Slovenian case that we may talk about selective amnesia or unwillingness of Slovenian revisionists to acknowledge their own crimes. Or as Aleida Assmann would put it, the revisionist narrative does not even include the victims of the Home Guards, let alone the acknowledgment of collaboration with the Nazis and fascists in the transformed memorial landscape. Assmann calls this a passive identity of victim, based on non-recognition of any shared responsibility for the committed crimes. What is

31 These matters were, in fact, decided by the Arts Council, which had already been established in the socialist period and which would initially not allow the mounting of Home Guard memorial plaques on the facades of cemetery chapels. According to one of local parish priests, the church was never opposed to the so-called parish plaques “being installed in selected places in the vicinity of church buildings,” but simultaneously stresses that they have been placed on the facades of buildings without the consent of the Church” (Pibernik, “Problemi in izzivi ob varovanju kulturnih dobrin cerkva,” 238–39).

32 Kržan, “Kdaj spravni spomenik.”

33 Drobnič, “O predlaganem spomeniku žrtvam vseh vojn.”

34 Kržan, “Kdaj spravni spomenik.”

35 Trontelj, “V iskanju izgubljenega sočutja.”

more, the function of self-victimization is not only running away from the responsibility of perpetrators, but also avoiding any “politics of remorse.”³⁶ What happened in Austria immediately after the war and in Germany at the end of the 1970s or in the early 1980s, occurred in Slovenia and other countries of the “Eastern Bloc” only after the fall of socialism. What is called “Engführung des Gedächtnisses” (narrowing of memory) in Germany may be regarded as conscious amnesia in Slovenia. The culture of self-victimization in Slovenia is therefore based not only on revision but on absolute negation of historical facts.

This is, among others, also evident from the discussion on totalitarianism, which was, like in other parts of the eastern coast of Europe, triggered by the resolutions and initiatives to equate all totalitarianisms. The said discussion places major emphasis on the thematization of “two periods of Slovenian totalitarian past”³⁷ and suppression of the memory of collaboration with the occupation regimes. However, during this process, Slovenia has, like other countries, ignored the Jewish victims by presenting the Holocaust as a process that had nothing to do with the Slovenes. The deportation of Jewish communities, as well as distinctly pro-Nazi ideology, including anti-Semitism, has thus been completely overlooked. While the glorification of the leader (Führer) was in the Slovenian case indeed replaced by the glorification of the “Fatherland” and “God,” the attitude toward Jews, manifested in the anti-Semitic hate speech, has remained the same: “Jews are out to enslave the world.”³⁸ From the Home Guard perspective, the partisans were “bought” and “drugged” by “Bolshevik-Jewish gold”³⁹ in order to destroy the Slovenian nation, “while on the side of the Slovenian Home Guards stands a German soldier fighting against worldwide

36 Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur*, 148.

37 Slovenian revisionists distinguish two periods of “revolutionary violence” in Slovenia. The first period reportedly began immediately after the occupation in 1941 and lasted until the mid-1950s. “In the second phase, which directly followed and lasted until independence [...] the violations of human rights were less noticeable and subtler, as the repression changed for tactical reasons and was implemented in a more sophisticated manner” (Kern, “Odstiranje zamolčanega”).

38 Lešnik and Tomc, *Rdeče in črno*, 123–24.

39 See also Tanja Lesničar-Pučko, “Sosedov ni več” [The neighbors are gone], *Dnevnik*, April 8, 2014, <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042645411/mnenja/kolumne/sosedov-ni-vec>.

Jewry.”⁴⁰ Like in some other parts of Central Europe, the fear of “Judeo-Communism” was also used in Slovenia as an alibi for the typical Christian anti-Semitism of Slovenian collaborators.

Therefore, from the Slovenian point of view, the assertion that European memory culture remains split is valid only in the part that relates to the comparison between Stalinism and communism. The anti-Semitism of the collaborating Vichy, the Jedwabne case in Poland, and the destruction of Jewish communities in the northeastern part of Slovenia are quite comparable. The difference lies in the comparison of Gulag and Auschwitz, since Slovenian revisionists, too, insist on consistent equation between Nazism and communism,⁴¹ remaining completely impervious even to the arguments of authorities such as Yehuda Bauer, who in his reference lecture “On Comparisons between Nazi Germany and the Soviet regime” explicitly stresses that:

to compare the crimes of violent and often murderous oppression of the Soviet regime and local communist regimes in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia [...] with the murder of many millions of Europeans by the Nazi regime (and) Nazi collaborators [...] is a distortion of history. It should be remembered that the so-called “Generalplan Ost,” developed by Nazi Germany in 1941/1943, planned the annihilation “as such”—to use the terminology on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of genocide—of three Baltic nations, of Poles [...] Czechs (and Slovenes) by forcible Germanization, expulsion and partial murder; of course, this was not known to the future potential victims. The Jews, on the other hand, were—all of them—to be annihilated, not only in Europe, but everywhere on earth [...] As far as the Soviets are concerned, with all their

⁴⁰ The Slovenian Home Guards claimed as late as 1945 that they “honestly fight side by side with Germany against the greatest enemy of humanity—communism” or “Jewish communism” (Lešnik and Tomc, *Rdeče in črno*, 124).

⁴¹ See also Sandra Kalniete, who in her autobiography (Kalniete, *Mit Ballschuhen im sibirischen Schnee*), published in German in 2005, rightly argues that the struggle against fascism cannot eclipse the immense number of victims of the “class ideology of the Soviet Union.” What I find problematic is the second part of her argument, which does not offer the “consensus of memory” (*Erinnerungskonsenses*) but a competition of victimization (*Opferkonkurrenz*) and a struggle for memory (*Erinnerungskampf*). Here after Asmman, *Das Unbehegane Das neue Unbehegane an der Erinnerungskultur*, 160.

brutality, they did not plan the annihilation of ethnic or national groups as such.⁴²

Bauer tries to make it clear that both regimes “were totalitarian, and yet quite different. The greater threat to all of humanity was Nazi Germany, and it was the Soviet Army that liberated Eastern Europe.” To imply that the war was “initiated by both regimes equally and that they therefore bear equal responsibility for the death of 35 million people in Europe alone [...] is a total perversion of history.” To commemorate victims (of both regimes, author’s insertion) equally is a distortion.”⁴³

What I find interesting is that Bauer omits to mention Yugoslavia. Did the fact that “it pursued a radically different approach to the building of socialism and communism from that of any of its East European neighbours”⁴⁴ perhaps mislead him as well into believing that dealing with Slovenian collaborators was less severe than executing members of Vlasov’s Army and that suffering on the Goli otok island was less painful than suffering in Gulag? Highly unlikely. Bauer is most probably aware that the Yugoslav regime was, much like that in Czechoslovakia, established above all on the basis of an implicit majority agreement. Or as Slavenka Drakulić would put it, the majority “kept their distance from politics, but accepted the Party membership card, because it facilitated their access to an apartment, a car, annual leave”⁴⁵ However, even more interesting is her assertion that communism is best understood through that which is not visible. Or to be more precise, through that which was not visible. Apart from the limitation of basic political rights, there was a question of hypocrisy, elitism, clientelism, corruption, incompetence, deteriorating performance of the people in charge, and the lack of individualism, which in Drakulić’s opinion “was the greatest sin that one could commit in a communist system.”⁴⁶

42 Bauer, “On Comparisons between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Regime.”

43 Ibid. It should be added that Slovenian revisionists have been systematically suppressing the fact that the Slovenes, like other Slavs, were less than fully human in the Nazi Germany’s eyes. They were perceived as Untermenschen whose only role would be to work as slaves for their German masters.

44 Holmes, *Post-Communism. An Introduction*, 94–95.

45 Drakulić, *Basne o komunizmu*, 43.

46 Ibid., 39.

And this, precisely, is one of the basic premises that are crucial for understanding the transformation of memory culture in former socialist countries. The prolongation-integration-exclusion process described above, namely, cannot stand any individualism either.

After the exclusion of their victims and the victims of the fascist and Nazi occupation, the revisionists display the collaborators and their family members as a uniform group of victims of communist terror. In the new history of World War II and the "communist" period, resistance against the occupying forces is being interpreted as a "communist revolution" and a war "against its own people."⁴⁷ Thus, in the newly created community of death, all victims of World War II and postwar period are being reorganized in two unified groups: one that is consigned to the "Party hell" and the other that enjoys the "Party heaven."⁴⁸ The nomenclature clearly follows the Christian liturgy, which also appears on the Home Guard monuments (*rest in peace, pacem in domino, I am the resurrection of life ...*). But more important than this are (a) complete de-subjectivization of and (b) utter disregard for the victims of Nazi and fascist terror as well as the victims of the Home Guards. If at all, the latter are merely referred to as "privileged avant-garde."⁴⁹ In this way, the memory of the victims of communism, as Charles Maier would put it, is heating up, while the memory of the victims of Nazism, fascism, and their local collaborators is cooling off.⁵⁰ And most importantly, like in the case of partisan monuments, whose aura is slowly fading away, the "victims" represented by Home Guard monuments do not fit in the process of individual participation in different levels of society either. In order to foster national community, the major element connecting this type of memorials is their implicit or explicit political significance. Despite being a collection of names, these monuments are appropriated, used, claimed and/or instrumentalized by other persons than immediate family and close friends. The relevance of these deaths is perceived as more important than individual victims. They create greater traumas and thus become a public is-

47 Dežman, "Slovenija—razpad tabujev titoizma in tranzicijska pravičnost," 44–48.

48 Ibid., 239.

49 Valič Zver, "Kraljestvo senc," 11.

50 Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory," 153.

sue. Therefore, there are no individuals on the side of the relatives either, since they lose control over the mourning and memorialization practices as well.⁵¹

There is, likewise, no “politics of regret” (Jeffrey Olick) and no real memory exchange for the time being in Slovenian memory culture; just a competition of victimization (Opferkonkurrenz). Because of that we can speak of “dehistoricised historiography,” which, according to Jacques Rancière, is unable to pin down the reality of a certain event.⁵² Historians who oppose the described revision and transformation of perpetrators into victims, namely, have a problem with proving the reality of a certain event/process. They are, as Rancière would put it, unable to refute the claim that something did not happen simply because the revisionist interpretation de-realizes it.⁵³ It is from this interpretive model that an unusually forceful negative interpretation of the resistance has emerged. Even more so, in revaluating it into a civil war and the Party hell, Slovenian revisionism disintegrated into the realism of “the politics of the possible,” which, according to Rancière, must be taken seriously because it is not an expression of the real. Rather, it is an expression of the possible, a type of realism that has launched the hunt for “non-existing entities.”

In trying to prove the impossibility of error on the part of fascist and Nazi collaborators, its Slovenian version maintains that “it is not possible that fifty percent of the Slovenian nation could have lived in error.”⁵⁴ Rather, it sought refuge under the wings of the occupying Nazi regime to fend off the danger of communism. The last chapter of this narrative may be seen in extreme revisionist voices attempting to proclaim the activities of the collaborators as “national-liberating and heroic.”⁵⁵ The same interpreters equate the resistance movement across the board with communism, despite the fact that less than one tenth of the resistance members were actually communists.

⁵¹ See also Peter Jan Margry and Cristina Sanchez-Carretero, *Grassroots Memorials. The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Deaths*.

⁵² Rancière, “Über den Nihilismus in der Politik,” 130.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁴ Ahačič, *Osvobodilna ali državljanska vojna*, 10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Twenty years after the end of socialism/communism, a part of post-communist historiography (not to mention politics) in Slovenia has a problem not only with the notion of real but with the notion of truth, which is why I agree with Norman Geras, who in reference to the debate on the Holocaust states that:

if there is no truth, there is no justice ... If truth is wholly relativized or internalised to particular discourse or language games ... final vocabulary, framework of instrumental success, culturally specific set of beliefs or practices of justification, there is no justice ... The victims and protestors of any putative injustice are deprived of their last and often best weapon, that of telling what really happened. They can only tell their story, which is something else. Morally and politically, therefore, anything goes.⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

Instead of recalling one of the techniques of post-communist reinterpretation of the traumatic past, I decided to conclude by trying to answer two questions:

Neither the first ("Why bother") nor the second ("What's next") seems to be very original, but for our debate they remain among the most crucial ones.

Besides the typical "if we don't do it someone else will deal with the issue (although not necessarily well) ..." answer, there is also a matter of quantity. People often think that both negationism and historical revisionism are marginal themes, of interest only to a "few troublemakers." However, I share Rancière's conviction that just the opposite is the case. In fact, both pose "a problem for all of us,"⁵⁷ since within the process they promote, the notion of *possibility* loses its plurality. In the revisionist interpretation, *possible* is reduced to *the only thing possible* (Rancière). Something similar happened with the meaning and role of metaphor. Metaphors are not only about imparting the hidden meanings or illus-

⁵⁶ Geras, "Language, Truth and Justice," 110–35.

⁵⁷ Rancière, "Über den Nihilismus in der Politik," 124.

tration thereof, they also bear a heuristic, that is, cognitive function. In no case can they be understood solely within the context of the author's interpretations, but should be considered above all within the framework of the semantic repertoire of the field/object of discussion.

In the revisionist speech, however, metaphors do not contribute to a clearer definition and hence a better understanding of what is being described, but rather blur the meaning of individual notions. In the revisionist "Politics of Death" (Die Toten-Politik), the significance of the dead is not related to their materiality but to their usability in the world of the living. Or as Heidemarie Uhl would put it, in the current practice of manipulating history, the destiny of a certain group of the dead serves as a symbol for the suffering of the whole nation.

At the same time, metaphors like *The Dark Side of the Moon* do not represent a resting place for all the suffering. Just the opposite: what Heidemarie Uhl defines as the new "Eastern European cult of death"⁵⁸ includes only the new victims or, at best, presents a framework for the revisionist competition of victimization. The most recent Slovenian example of this sort is the new monument to the "martyrs of the revolution," which the advocates of the Home Guard have erected some 40 miles from the Slovenian capital. In the recently recreated memorial setting in the main square of a small town in central Slovenia, the real partisans and some civilian victims of fascism and Nazism that are represented by the already existing monument in the same square are now being symbolically transformed into perpetrators. According to the inscription on the monument, they are challenged as "communists, brothers by birth, strangers by mind." The collaborating Home Guards, on the other hand, are presented as members of "the Slovenian National Army," waiting for the new "generation [to] break the shackles of false silence" and restore their "stolen honour and truth ..."

The diction is consistent with the language generally used by the majority of Home Guard monuments representing the "victims of communist violence." The inscription calling for a radical present and future-oriented reinterpretation of history is written in a typically archaic style, laced with metaphors. But even more important is the re-

58 Uhl, "Totenkult und politisches Gedächtnis in Ex-Jugoslawien," 7.

alization that, in Slovenia, the conversion of collaborators into victims was followed by the (final) shift of guilt onto the real victims of Nazism and fascism. Thus it may be said that, in one part of Slovenian political public, the formerly Eastern European echo to the Western European tradition based on “to forgive” and “to forget” resonates with (the likewise) characteristic “to forge” ... The part of Slovenian historiography that perpetuates this is still insisting on the false dilemma: “Either Germanism or the Jewish-plutocratic-communist mentality.”⁵⁹

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According to this the conclusion is rather clear and simple. What started as a conflict of two interpretations of World War II transformed into an interpretive battlefield where political power may be gained. In the reconstitution of Slovenian national identity, which is being mediated through an intense moral, political, and intellectual perception, the communal and individual search for legitimation became part of a political power play where interpretation of the past is being transformed into the politics of history.

This is why I agree with Ian Buruma when he states that “the wrong interpretations of the past are more dangerous than ignorance.” Nevertheless we all know that “the murder and starvation” went hand in hand with “constant degradation and humiliation” of occupiers and collaborators.⁶⁰

And finally, I also agree with Katherine Verdery when she says that post-communist memory is (or should be) a little more than just snipping out sections of the timeline and then attaching the pre-communist period to the present and future as the nation’s true or authentic trajectory. Nevertheless, historiography does not operate in isolation from the rest of society, but rather represents a social practice that is entangled, harmonized, or contrasted. Therefore, in a given system of post-communist (re)interpretations, one may not necessarily have to know all aspects of truth to be able to recognize a revisionist lie.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See Lešnik and Tomc, *Rdeče in črno*, 123–26.

⁶⁰ Buruma, *Year Zero*, 79.

⁶¹ See also Petrović, “From Revisionism to ‘Revisionism.’”

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Of **Red Dragons** *and* **Evil Spirits**

Important, innovative and appealing, Oto Luthar's volume problematizes the intersection of the "political involvement in interpretation of the past" and the "nationalisation of the past by reinvention of 'authentic national historical memory'." Examining various reinterpretations of World War II, the Holocaust, and their socialist discourses and the competing historical memories that they produced in the last 25 years, the authors' fresh research focuses on case studies of 8 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia). Engagingly argued, each chapter reveals how rival memories become instrumental in the most recent agendas of post-socialist political agents. Addressing a significant and timely topic, Oto Luthar has edited an excellent volume that not only adds to recent scholarship in the field of memory studies, but also fills a gap in East European historiographies, exposing their political motivations.

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